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MAN THE RAMPARTS

The public now knows that a part of the B.E.F. may soon have to choose between annihilation or capitulation. Lest we should let the magnitude of this human and national disaster warp our judgment it will be no bad thing to begin by taking stock of our assets. In our own country the public is at length fully awake; and it has a Government that it can trust. Improvising in haste, it has already set in motion, thanks to new and energetic Ministers, schemes for the reorganisation of our labour force and the urgent work of supply. In France, the disastrous strategy of passive defence has been discarded, and under M. Reynaud and General Weygand new men are reorganising a nation that knows not only its dangers but its greatness. On the open seas the British and French navies are intact and as efficient as ever. In the air, whatever its numerical inferiority may be, our Air Force has won by its incredible daring and skill a moral ascendancy that promises it the command of the air, when we can double the total of its machines. The enemy, risking his fate on a single summer's campaign, is using up in a terrific offensive reserves of oil which he cannot replace. With the same calculated prodigality he flings away the best of his shock troops, his short-lived planes and his indispensable tanks. On the further horizon, the United States expands the volume of its material aid and sheds each day some of its reservations and its hesitations. From Moscow, thanks to the good sense that sends out Sir Stafford Cripps, we may hope for a new orientation. These are omens that may promise victory, if we can hold out through the grim ordeal that faces us this summer.

This immediate issue of survival turns, in the four perilous months that lie ahead, primarily on three factors. The speeding up of the manufacture of planes and tanks needs no further emphasis. What France can do is the affair of her leaders. The third factor is our own problem of man-power. The school of thought that dominated the War Office and the late Government had never faced the meaning of total war. It relied on a small professional expeditionary force, postponed conscription to the last moment, and called up the militia classes slowly and at long intervals. The result is that we face the loss of a part of the B.E.F. with a wholly inadequate reserve of fully-trained men. We ought in this crisis to be sending a new army to reinforce the French on the Somme and the Aisne. But we ought also to keep in this island large forces of reliable troops to meet invasion. What we may have to meet is not merely a descent of air-borne troops, but a landing across the narrow waters, under the escort of a whole aerial armada, of shock troops with their tanks. That is not a task for half-trained militia.

In one way alone can this need be met, adequately and promptly. It is possible to turn half-trained men into shock troops, if their spirit is high, by mixing with them experienced veterans. The French are acting on this principle. It was, we recall, the secret of the success of the International Brigade, which fought so gallantly in Spain. It had in its ranks many half-trained men and some who started untrained; but it had also a leaven of veterans of all ranks and all nations from the last war. Thanks to them it was steady from the first and daring to the last.

We have in this island no lack of such men, officers, N.C.O.s and privates, who saw service in the last war and are not yet too old in mind and body to serve again. To draft them indiscriminately into the Local Defence Volunteers is to waste them. That force is indispensable, but it can be manned by the older men and the younger lads, and by others who cannot quit their civilian tasks. We would urge that the younger veterans should be called up without a day's delay and drafted into the half-trained militia units. A mixture of one veteran to three, four or five half-trained men would suffice to make all but the latest levies immediately available for the most exacting duties.

In pressing this suggestion upon Mr. Eden and our own friends in the House, we are well aware of the difficulties that professional soldiers will raise. They prefer that every unit should be homogeneous. Their sense of order and symmetry will be outraged. They may point out that middle-aged men could not be treated like the boys who would march beside them. All this may be true, but we face an emergency that calls for daring and improvisation. We are confronted by a dilemma. If we man this island adequately we cannot send sufficient aid to France. But if we allow France to be overwhelmed, while Italy waits for the signal to attack, can we be sure of our own survival? It is, in short, imperative that we should make our maximum contribution of man-power, and make it at once. By blending the younger veterans with the partially trained militia, the thing may yet be done.

The Battle in the North

The capitulation of the Belgian army at 4 a.m. on Tuesday morning, hastened the end of the struggle in the North, but did not change its character. In the first days, when the German mechanised vanguard opened the "gap" on the north bank of the Somme, took Amiens and swung round to the coast, it may be true that it relied on surprise and on the terror of its flying artillery, its tanks, and its mechanical cavalry, and had no large number of men in these advanced positions. For a day or two, as the Allies attacked the northern flank of the moving wedge at Arras and Cambrai, it was reasonable to hope that the gap might be narrowed, if not closed. But behind this mechanised vanguard, the mass of the German armies has been steadily marching to the front—down from Holland, past the fallen forts of Liege and Namur, and through the Ardennes. In the end the Allied armies were out-numbered as well as out-planed and out-tanked. All they could do was to fight a stubborn rearguard action, as they withdrew gradually towards the Channel ports. On the Southern Flank, the French meanwhile were massing and capturing bridgeheads with some success. But they were not yet ready to undertake a major offensive. To criticise them is wholly unreasonable. They had, after the break of Sedan, to re-form their front on a wholly new plan, under new generals, after discarding between dawn and dusk the theory and tactics of passive defence on which they had been trained for years. Above all, they lacked heavy tanks or the means of combating those of the enemy, who also had superiority in the air. The duty of the Northern Army was to win time for this complete transformation south of the Somme and Aisne. This duty, at a heavy cost, it has fulfilled.

The Belgian Surrender

On the Belgian capitulation, it is wiser, following Mr. Churchill, to suspend our judgment. King Leopold has always been a King of somewhat authoritarian views. It was his influence that broke the alliance with France five years ago, and latterly he was adamant in refusing any conversations with the Allied staffs to concert joint measures against a possible German invasion. In this instance, he determined on surrender against the unanimous opinion of his Ministers, who have now disowned both him and his act. On his side he could argue that further resistance was useless. His armies had been driven back beyond their bases and sources of supply. They had fought bravely and lost heavily, and for three days had had no food but biscuits. Was he to risk the destruction of one after another of his towns, while the Germans crushed the refugees under their tanks and machine-gunned them from the air? The aspect of the King's act that we find it impossible to excuse, was that it was done without warning to his French and British allies, whose troops were inextricably mixed with his. Thanks to this detail, the problem of withdrawing to Dunkirk, the only port left open, was rendered doubly difficult. The operation, if it be in any degree possible, will have to be effected under heavy aerial bombardment. These narrow waters are, moreover, so perilous to surface ships, that only destroyers seem now to navigate them. But with equal gallantry, sailors and soldiers are striving to achieve this miracle. As at Boulogne we may be sure that the material will be destroyed.

The New Warfare

The ghastly history of war provides no parallel to the mechanised slaughter now proceeding in Belgium and France. How great the casualties are no one can compute. The Nazis have wiped whole towns and villages off the map, killing with bombs, machine-guns and tanks, soldiers and civilians alike. On the Allied side the R.A.F. still aiming at military objectives, have carried out mass destruction on the Rhine, and there are reliable reports that these first attacks on German soil have caused consternation in Germany. At an earlier stage in the war when the German troops were still concentrated in the East, Germany's communications and military objectives might have been bombed with little loss of civilian life. The Nazi method is to accomplish everything at one stroke. How elaborately their preparations have been made for the new type of war and how carefully they have been elaborated for each neutral and belligerent country we now learn from the report of the disruption and invasion of the Low Countries. The Dutch were well aware that the attack was coming and had taken what they believed to be thorough precautions. They had blocked roads, rendered aerodromes unusable by scattering boulders on them and set up an elaborate system of sentries. Nevertheless the attack on May 10th was so well timed and carefully thought out that the Germans were able to capture important aerodromes, to upset communications, to set numerous buildings on fire and to kill large numbers of men by the combined action of parachutists and Fifth Columnists. The dislocation of the telephone service was so remarkable that the Dutch were forced to communicate with Belgium through London. Papers captured on parachutists gave evidence of the most detailed plans; even the positions of telephone kiosks were carefully noted. What exactly is planned for this country we do not know. The Government counter-measures must be both thorough and swift.

Morrison and Bevin at Work

In a fortnight the Ministries of Supply and Labour have been galvanised into action. What Herbert Morrison, now assisted by his old clerk to the L.C.C., Sir George Gayter, and by Sir Walter Layton, has been able to accomplish indicates only too clearly the negligence of his predecessor. By efficient administration and by a purge of the undesirable elements hanging round the Ministry, he should be able at once to increase production by 25 per cent. We can expect an immediate dose of nationalisation: and the threat that the Government will "permit no private vested interests to stand in the way of the nation's need," should do a power of good. Equally important, Ernest Bevin has already shown that he has the measure of the labour problem. Acting always in consultation with the Trade Unions and retaining wherever possible the principle of voluntary service, he has at once begun the planning of our labour resources. Scrapping the paper machinery of his predecessor he has set up a Production Council under Arthur Greenwood and a Central Labour Supply Board with local committees, on which the Trade Unions will be represented generously. Trade Union officials will also be seconded to act as Ministry Inspectors whose job it will be to see that our productive capacities are fully employed. In an important passage of his Saturday broadcast, he referred scathingly to the status of the agricultural labourer, attacking by implication the proposal to fix the minimum wage at 42*s.* On this point we can expect action in the near future, to make this minimum not less than that of railwaymen and Council employees in rural areas. Not less important has been his attention to the personal welfare of the workers to be mobilised. By making his department take cognisance of such problems as billetting, communal feeding, etc., he has given it a new spirit which should make it possible to impose the necessary compulsion with a minimum of friction. In a fortnight Ernest Bevin has done more than Ernest Brown in his long tenure of office.

Wages and the Trade Unions

While Mr. Morrison and Mr. Bevin are thus getting on with their job of economic reorganisation, the Trade Unions are also readjusting themselves to the new state of affairs. At his Conference with their representatives last Saturday, Mr. Bevin outlined a new plan of wage-regulation which, though its details have not been announced, seems to imply that the Government mean to take control over all wages—at any rate in the essential industries—at a fixed date in the near future. In the meantime, he urged all Unions to settle questions at present outstanding with the employers as quickly as possible. Presumably, his speech foreshadows some sort of compulsory arbitration where industries remain in private hands, and some court for settling wages and general conditions where the State itself becomes the employer. The Unions will undoubtedly be ready to accept such a scheme, if it is fairly worked and combined with adequate assurances that the promised elimination of all excess profits really means what it seems to mean. The National Committee of the Amalgamated Engineering Union—which is not really a "committee," but a national Conference of delegates—meeting this week at Morecambe, rejected by 30 votes to 9 a resolution from some of the Scottish delegates opposing Labour participation in the Government. The size of the minority, in such an emergency as now exists, is at first sight surprising; but it must be remembered that the delegates were chosen some time ago, and that the A.E.U. is one of the Unions to which the Communists and their friends have devoted very special attention. It is most unlikely that the vote at all represents the distribution of rank and file opinion at the present moment.

It should, however, in conjunction with the decision, against the Executive's wish, to press on with the demand for an all-round wage-increase, be taken as a warning by the Government. There has been much dissatisfaction in the Trade Unions at the late Government's failure to make any effective use of the local consultative machinery set up some months ago for the discussion of emergency labour problems, and also at the continuance of war profits and the failure to take effective control over the war industries. There is good reason to believe that all these questions are now beginning to be handled in a very different way; and it is vital to realise that a correct handling of labour locally and in the factories as well as nationally is indispensable to prevent the severe strain of continuous overtime and speeding-up from causing dangerous mass-neuroses among the workers. Such neuroses, if they are allowed to develop, will be speedily exploited by the Fifth Column: they can be kept within manageable limits only by making plain, in deed as well as word, that the profits of the national effort are not accruing to the capitalist class, and by curbing those factory owners and managers who still hold that more can be got out of men by driving them remorselessly than by persuading them to give of their best.

Evacuation

On Sunday evening, in a somewhat stiff and official broadcast, Mr. Malcolm MacDonald announced the decision to evacuate the children from the area stretching south from Yarmouth to the coasts of Kent. Unfortunately the Minister of Health has permitted this evacuation to depend on the wishes of parents. Such half-measures seem to us entirely inadequate to the needs of to-day. With the possibility of invasion before us, all civilians whose work does not render it essential to remain, should be evacuated at once under the new Emergency Powers from the south-eastern coastal areas, or else drafted into volunteer pioneer corps for the preparation of defence-works. In the total warfare developed by the Nazis, the harassed civilian refugees, crowding along the roads, are a weapon of immense utility to the aggressors, and it is neither humane nor strategically wise to leave this weapon where it can be used by them. Mr. MacDonald perhaps was scared of "compulsion": if so, he has misread the mood of the public which demands not a tender solicitude for its convenience but drastic action for the country's defence. Nor need he worry about the homes on which the evacuees would be billeted. The morale of the country would be strengthened if the women, especially the middle-class women, in the "safe" areas were given a piece of national service to do.

The Ministry of Information

Mr. Noel Baker, in a speech of unusual power, opened a useful debate on Tuesday upon the Ministry of Information. Arguing that propaganda was no substitute for policy, he suggested that the greatest need on the Home Front, if Hitler tries to invade us, was not words but a chance for the people to help in defence work by voluntary labour on fortifications. With regard to the Ministry itself, he made an urgent plea for a unification of the propaganda services and for enemy propaganda directed to the anti-Nazi minority. On the latter point, Mr. Duff-Cooper, who admitted himself ill-prepared for the debate, was reassuring: he also indicated that there would be a closer control of B.B.C. announcements, and most important of all stated that he would attend Cabinet Meetings in future to represent what had now become a Service Ministry. It is to be hoped that he will bear in mind Mr. Noel Baker's description of the disgraceful under-staffing and accommodation of the Broadcast News Services and not permit either himself nor Mr. Harold Nicolson to be beguiled by their great success as broadcasters into neglecting their real job, the transformation of what is still a ramshackle Ministry, surrounded by departmental jealousies, into an efficient instrument for propaganda not only for the British but for the Allied Cause.

All MSS. and letters should be addressed to the Editor, at 10 Great Turnstile, High Holborn, London, W.C.1.

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A Strange Parliament

The new turn of events has meant that we now have a House of Commons quite unrepresentative of the will of the people. Out of the six hundred odd M.P.s only 250 at the most can be said on their past records to be supporters of the Churchill-Labour Government: the 350 loyal Chamberlainites are as lukewarm in their toleration of it, as Labour was of the previous Cabinet. They will remain passive so long as the crisis lasts, but then the sniping will begin. Meanwhile the Labour Party, under the expert guidance of Mr. Lees-Smith, is organising itself into a constructive opposition. We believe that in this situation Ministers would be well advised to consider a system of ministerial commissions, attached to each important department. Such commissions, composed partly of outstanding younger Civil Servants and experts and partly of M.P.s, would act as a staff to the Minister and enable him to cut through the departmental routine with which many senior Civil Servants surround their work. The higher grades of the Civil Service cannot be purged overnight, and it is already evident that Parliamentary Committees such as that on waste can only fulfil the negative function of a censor. What is wanted is the transformation of the leisurely committee method into the staff method which war demands. The Commissions might help to that end, and provide useful experience and employment for the able back-bencher.

THE DEMOCRATIC REVOLUTION

DURING the last fortnight we have seen a terrible reverse abroad and a startling advance on the home front. Once again, in a moment of grave national danger, democracy has shaken itself out of its sleep and initiated the first stage of a revolution which must be completed if it is to avoid destruction.

The symbol of that revolution was the great trade union meeting last Saturday and, even more, Mr. Bevin's broadcast on the same evening. Organised labour in an alliance with the Liberal Opposition and a small group of mutinous Tories has challenged and overthrown the men who for ten years have controlled the obsequious Conservative majority in the Commons and through it the policy of this country. The aim long conceived by the advocates of the popular front as the means of forestalling disaster has at last been realised and as if in recognition of this fact Sir Stafford Cripps has been selected as the emissary of the new Government to Moscow.

To many the new Churchill-Labour Government will seem a queer and fortuitous alliance, but it is based on a community of outlook which goes back beyond the present crisis. Both the dissident Tories and organised labour have detested the Baldwin-Chamberlain regime as the leaders of those hard-faced men, who were returned to Parliament by the coupon election of 1918 and have dominated this country ever since—the Nuffields, the Austins and the City financiers, whose guiding principle has been that the good of the community must be subordinated to the short-term interests of British business both at home and abroad.

Such a concept of politics violated the principles not only of Socialism, but of the sincere Imperialists. The imperialism of Churchill and Amery, of Boothby and Cartland is, in our view, narrow and antiquated, but at least it is based on the idea of an honest acceptance of British responsibilities which have been rightly or wrongly undertaken and it wishes to use the State not merely to further private interests, but to accomplish an imperial idea. These men have vision, though their vision may not be ours, and their consciences have been deeply shocked by the blindness and moral levity of British policy in the last ten years. Between them, Mr. Baldwin and Mr. Chamberlain succeeded in driving all the best elements in their own party into a mutinous and ineffective opposition. Ineffective because Tory imperialism, in spite of its vigour and expert understanding of foreign affairs, has had little backing in the country and, even more important, has possessed no home policy worth the name. So there came a deadlock which enabled the Chamberlain regime to bring us to the edge of sheer catastrophe. The Churchillians could not break the power of Captain Margesson and Labour could not overthrow Mr. Chamberlain without a Tory revolt. So Captain Margesson had it all his own way, while our enemies marched to the very gates of Calais.

Labour has played a crucial part in creating the new Government. It took the lead in the vote of censure and thus enabled the Tory revolt to take place; when Mr. Chamberlain was forced to admit the need for a new Government, Labour took the responsibility for refusing him as Premier. Having accepted Mr. Churchill as Premier, Labour leadership rose to the occasion, steered the Party through a very awkward conference and took the main responsibility for the Home Front upon its shoulders. Roughly speaking, we can now say that the control of the military effort is in the hands of the Churchillians, that of the industrial effort in the hands of Labour. The words "national unity" have regained their proper meaning. Conservatives, who are willing to sacrifice private interests to defend their idea of Empire, are collaborating with organised Labour, which is also prepared to defend an Empire in which, they intend, private interest shall be subordinated to the public good.

The result of this collaboration is to be seen in every Order in Council which is now issued. We are at the beginning of a period of war socialism. Seen from the strictly economic aspect, it must, at present, bear some resemblance to the system prevailing in Germany—unlimited Government control over private property, unlimited governmental control over the conditions and hours of labour, and, where it is necessary in the interests of increased production, actual nationalisation of the means of production, distribution and exchange. What makes such a system utterly different from a totalitarian economy is precisely those features which Labour contributes to it—the active collaboration of trade unions instead of their suppression, a 100 per cent. tax on excess profits and safeguards under which civil and industrial rights sacrificed during the war will be restored when peace comes. We cannot actually achieve socialism during the war, but we can institute a whole series of Government controls which after the war may be used for Socialist ends. With a nationalised arms industry, a national control of exports and imports and banking, with a new attitude to the agricultural worker, such as Mr. Bevin outlined on Saturday, we can not only hope to win through the present crisis, but we can have some assurance that on the basis we now build a better social order can in the future be created. There is no going back from the Orders in Council issued last week. They lead either to the Fascist or to the Socialist planned economy: Labour's participation in the Government is our best guarantee that the second alternative will prevail.

There are, however, two dangers which must be faced. All classes in the country have welcomed both the Government and its measures. Labour has not only recovered the prestige it had in 1929. For the first time it has convinced millions of non-political voters of its essential contribution to the nation. But the movement must not stop there. If we merely substitute one government and one set of rulers for another, the stimulus will wear off and people may go back once again into the passivity which the previous government regarded as their proper condition. The revolution must go down far below the parliamentary and Whitehall level. For years in the management of industry, in local and central government, in the control of voluntary societies, the "safe" men and women have been preferred and those with foresight and vision have been condemned as troublesome. The lamentable influence of Sir Horace Wilson on the whole Civil Service is well known: but that is not the worst, his spirit has brooded over every sphere of national life. Smug placemen have achieved positions of responsibility. They could be reckoned on to pigeon-hole every awkward decision, to cover with a smear of good-will every lazy compromise and to vilify in the politest way those who dared to criticise their ineffectiveness. For ten years the spiritual progeny of Sir Horace have maintained the myth of their indispensability. In the moment of national crisis, the only indispensable thing is to remove them. In their own interests, responsibility should be taken from their shaking hands; there is no defeatism more deadly than that of officials who identify incapacity and spinelessness with democracy, action and courage with the dictatorships. So long as such men continue to hold office, Hitler needs no Fifth Column here. They perform its function all the more effectively because their accents and antecedents are correct and their motives above suspicion.

On the other side of the picture, a long period of disillusionment and opposition has bred in the Labour Movement an opposition-mindedness now totally out of place. If the national effort is to be maintained at its present level not only the Labour leaders, but the Labour rank and file must rise to the occasion. Constructive criticism remains essential, but the notion that it is the mark of the true Socialist always to be "agin the Government" must be forgotten. In the Trade Union branch, in A.R.P. in the local defence forces and Ministry of Information Committees, Socialists must shoulder responsibilities as courageously as their leaders at Westminster. This is a workers' war: if we are determined, the peace will be a workers' peace. Without the active participation of the rank and file, the second stage of the democratic revolution will be impossible.

The other danger is even graver. The Labour leaders have taken control of the industrial machine and can be trusted to do their job. But what of the other departments and what in particular of the defence of this island? We are in danger of invasion and it is silly to disguise this fact. But so far all that has been done is the formation of "Parashoot corps," ill-equipped and untrained, and the partial evacuation of children from East coast areas. We urge in this situation three things: first that evacuation from these areas be made compulsory and that all the local labour available should be enrolled for the construction of defences; secondly that the tens of thousands of men with war-experience and capacity for leadership should be used in positions of responsibility in this home defence; and thirdly that the work of destroying parachutists be given to mobile, well armed units and not left to local posses armed with shot-guns. Old War Office routines must be scrapped in this crisis and emergency defences built by men with the spirit and drive of Bevin and Morrison. Efficient production is useless if the arms produced and the armies are in the charge of military routineers.

The Labour Party should not follow public opinion solicitously, but march ahead of it in its demands for a liquidation of incompetence, for clear and precise orders from the new government and for the mobilisation of all citizens in the war-effort. In so doing, it will express the will not only of organised labour but of the whole nation. The war will only be won if we carry the democratic revolution into the organisation of the defences of this island.

RIP VAN AMERICA AWAKES

(FROM AN AMERICAN CORRESPONDENT)

New York City (by air mail).

IF imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, Great Britain should feel extremely flattered to-day, for every mistake, every feat of ostrich-like negligence, every example of studied blindness to events happening just beyond the length of one's own nose, of which England was guilty during the lotus years, has had its counterpart during these last months in the United States of America.

Rarely in recorded history has any nation suffered such a rude awakening as that which caused American politicians to dive into storm-cellars when the Nazi juggernaut began smashing its ugly way across the Low Countries, from which funkholes they emerged, considerably shaken, to vote the Roosevelt Administration what amounted practically to a blank cheque for rearmament-in-a-hurry.

Neutrality no longer has any meaning, on the banks of either the River Meuse or the Potomac. An ill-assorted band composed of Communists, Nazi Fifth Columnists, last-ditch Isolationists and Mr. William Randolph Hearst, are still yelling "keep out," but no one is listening any more. The theme-song has changed overnight. Since Washington—and, more importantly, Kansas City and Omaha—heard the echo of the guns on the Western Front and appetites were spoilt by General Gamelin's "back to the wall" order, the tune has changed to "keep the war in Europe." Even Senator Norris, apostle of Isolationism, who opposed the entry of the United States into the last war, has gone on record as favouring giving all possible aid, "short of war," to the hard-pressed Allies.

There can be no doubt that America means business, just as Britain meant business after the rape of Czechoslovakia. Britain awakened from a beautiful sleep dangerously late. Uncle Sam, his dreams of Isolation shattered by the latest blitzkrieg, has jerked himself out of slumber to face the grim fact that the Nazis have the jump on him by just six years—and around 24,000 warplanes!

The Presidential address to Congress, and other pronouncements of the last fourteen days suggest that the awakening of the United States—and the now grimly held contention of Americans that "that guy Hitler" must be stopped—will have tremendous consequences for Western civilisation. To-day the United States is, on land and in the air, weaker than Switzerland. But this country is *potentially* the greatest military powerhouse on earth, possessing the Big Five of modern war—oil, steel, technical facilities, brains and men—in prodigious quantities. Already the brains and industrial facilities are being mobilised at a gallop. If only the Allies can hold the German forces through the balance of the 1940 fighting season, this country has the brains and ability, in the words of the *New York Sun*, " to make the Nazis look like amateur production men."

With all groups united behind the President in a drive to give the Allied forces every aid (Americans have suddenly realised, with a chill feeling down their spines, that Hitler's peace terms might include the surrender of the British Navy !) the twin-jobs of (*a*) rushing warplanes to the embattled Allies, and (*b*) turning the United States from an opulent and lazy democracy of the usual pattern into an avenging host capable of dealing with the Berlin gangsters, with an army of continental dimensions, are being pressed forward by a titanic three-shift drive greater than anything achieved during the last war. The German fury in the West is being matched by the American fury in the Middle West !

A word of warning should, however, be sounded if disappointment is to be avoided. Questions concerning whether the Yanks are—or are not—coming, will remain mere academic discussion for many months to come. The problem is no longer " Will Uncle Sam help ? " but " *how* can America help in time ? "

The United States possesses the second most powerful navy in the world, but over all navies now hovers the shadow of the dive-bomber. That navy, in an excellent state of preparedness, is on police duty in the Pacific. This nation is scheduled to have 2,600 army aircraft by June, 1940 (some of which may have been rushed over to aid the Allies by the time these lines are read), and a most efficient aircraft industry, now being geared-up to produce those 50,000 warplanes a year for which the President asked and which, given time, can produce enough bombers to " darken the skies over Germany." I would not put an annual production of 50,000 planes a year past the potentialities of America's aircraft industry. But on land and in the sphere of mechanised equipment, the United States is starting almost from scratch.

The U.S. army to-day consists of around 491,000 troops, including an authorised 251,000 National Guards, who are only partly trained. Only 73,000 of those troops are at present properly equipped for modern warfare. Production of tanks, guns and equipment is to be rushed, and it is hoped to have 750,000 fully equipped troops *by next summer*. To-day it is doubtful if the United States army—man for man as good as any in Europe—could, in an emergency, do more than deal with Fifth Columnists and saboteurs. With twenty-five per cent. of the total population of German race, and the whole country stiff with Nazi agents, the United States may safely be presumed to have a Fifth Column within its borders of imposing dimensions !

For the rest, with Isolationism on the skids, the picture presented to the American people by an uncensored press is grim enough to account for the huge swingover in public opinion recorded by all indices these last days.

Mayor La Guardia of New York City declared the other day that in the whole United States there are not enough anti-aircraft guns to defend Coney Island. Searchlights, detectors and all other anti-aircraft equipment are lacking, and the production facilities do not at present exist to create them in large quantities.

Major-General Haskell, of the U.S. National Guard, declares the New York garrison has less than one gas-mask for every ten men, and of those in stock 90 per cent. are for training purposes only and useless in war. The regular army has no heavy tanks, few medium tanks, and only 400 tanks in all. American army divisions are at present equipped with only 18 anti-tank guns compared with 72 in a German division. The present small " Initial Protective Force," spearhead of the tiny United States army, is short of armoured cars, scout cars and even motor-cycles—this in a country which will this year turn out five million automobiles. As for artillery, in the last war no American artillery (apart from a few heavy railway guns) ever fired a shot on the Western Front, and the present situation and prospects are little better.

This time, however, warplanes are the acid test. Here, again, the United States starts, if not exactly from scratch, at least very near it.

So far as material is concerned, the U.S. Army and Navy air arms possess some 3,500 planes, with more on order. A number of those at present in use are said to be obsolete. To train the 25,000 additional pilots in two years called for by an army extension programme authorised by Congress before the *Blitzkrieg* against the Low Countries opened, it is estimated that 6,000 flying instructors are needed. At the moment the army has 300 ! To keep President Roosevelt's 50,000 warplanes in the air would require an air force of 500,000 men ; the United States is not even in sight of proper equipment for 500,000 men in its whole army, declares General Hugh Johnson.

How can the almost unanimous desire to help the Allies be translated, during the vital weeks ahead, into practical form while the disastrous time-lag is being liquidated ?

The first and most obvious way is to speed the delivery of aircraft to Britain and France—even if it means denuding the U.S. Army of existing squadrons. The next is by leaving the U.S. fleet at Hawaii as a gentle hint to the Japanese not to go adventuring in Dutch colonial waters. (British people may not realise the U.S. battle-fleet has been at its " battle station " for weeks past.) The U.S. is assisting materially by throwing the mantle of " hemispherical isolation " over Canada, Greenland, the British and Dutch West Indies, Trinidad and other Allied possessions in the Western Hemisphere. An obvious method of aiding the Allies is by extending war credits, thus placing the whole weight of America's financial strength behind the battling armies *and against Germany*. (But the U.S. would like to know, all the same, why in the ninth month of the war, Great Britain and France had placed orders for only 2,400 planes in America—and why during the long *Sitzkrieg* no effort was made by the Allies to keep existing American aircraft factories fully employed ?)

In this emergency the United States may reverse its previous decision and allow the Allies to buy the U.S. army secret bomb-sighting apparatus, reputedly twenty years ahead of anything of its kind in the world (with this instrument American pilots have, it is claimed, put seven bombs out of ten inside a sixteen-feet circle from a height of 10,000 feet) and other technical improvements at present on the secret list.

Food can be rushed over to defeat any counter-blockade. Merchant shipping can be loaned to the Allies if needed, or sold on credit. (Up to April 1st, 178 United States vessels had been sold for cash.) The United States Navy and Air Force might be sent to Europe, as many here advocate, to help smash the Hitlerite threat to all civilisation. Nothing is any longer impossible. In the last resort, some feel, if it becomes clear that Hitler's desperate gamble for a decision this year has failed, and such a step might swing the issue, American troops might " come over "—next year—in order to keep the war in Europe, away from these shores. But such a development is still a long way off.

At the moment United States opinion is more strongly pro-British than at any time within living memory. Unless the British government huffs the ball by some ill-advised move, such as an attempt to propitiate the Japanese at the expense of China, it will remain so.

When one considers what the prevailing pro-Ally sentiment will mean to the hard-pressed British and French Empires if this war goes the full fifteen rounds, a different picture emerges—a picture of a nation equipped as no other on earth to meet the German challenge.

Behind the American Front stands marshalled 167,000 factories, 8,000,000 farmsteads, an oil output totalling more than one million barrels daily, a steel industry which in peacetime (employed to only 60 per cent. of capacity !) exported on average two million tons of steel products annually, and which can jerk that figure up five hundred per cent. within a few months. A nation possessing such prodigious reserves of industrial and human equipment that once it gets going it will be hard to stop this side of Unter den Linden.

BUT—the United States is at this moment a steamroller, just getting up a head of steam, not a *Panzerdivisionen !* Time is needed: If the Allies can hold out, then—to quote the famous remark of Dorothy Thompson after her celebrated meeting with Hitler some years ago. " Oh ! Adolf, you are going to be out of luck ! "

THE PARASHOTS

OUR chickens are certainly coming home to roost. Just four years ago—owing to the good offices of the British and French Governments in holding up their rifles—the Abyssinian villagers armed with sporting guns and spears, turned out to fight the Italians. A week after the formation of the " parashots," in our West Country village, we had our first night alarm and turned out even less efficiently armed. About 25 of us were collected with some difficulty at 3 o'clock in the morning to guard a local aerodrome, now out of use and therefore very suitable for an enemy landing. We managed to muster 18 shotguns and a few cartridges. They would have killed a snipe at 30 yards and a German at 10. Luckily no Germans came.

Later in the day we met again, and this was our first connection with headquarters. There was, of course, no question of getting uniforms or even armlets, but we had hoped for a few weapons which might be effective at 100 yards. Actually we received none at all, only a little vague advice. The village decided to mobilise itself. There was some very confidential talk about squaring the police in the matter of licences. After some of us had promised to do so, three old revolvers and two service rifles were unearthed from their secret hiding places and brought, covered carefully in newspapers, to the village hall. Our armoury remains the same, after a period of time sufficient to overrun Holland twice.

I suppose our village is fairly typical of the rather prosperous parts of the West Country. Certain considerations leap to the eye. First, our volunteers were of a very fine physique and our muster really blows the gaff on the whole system of conscription as worked by our War Office. Nearly everyone would have jumped at the chance of going straight on active service. The older ones were all ex-service men and most of the remainder had been waiting weary months to be called up. On the whole they were a far tougher collection of men than the ordinary draft going to a regiment. It would be easy to take at least half of them and put them in a regiment, knowing they would require far less training than militiamen.

The next point is about their rifles. It would seem that even when they are issued, they will have to be kept at a police station some miles away. This means in practice that it will take about a couple of hours to collect the men and arms and get them to those places which lend themselves to parachute attack or the landing of troop-carriers. In a village we know our people. The force has been picked, and every member is thoroughly reliable. There is hardly one who is not an old soldier or the son of an ex-service man. They are used to handling firearms. It is surprising the number who had at least a 16-bore gun in their house which they used for rabbiting or surreptitiously for an odd pheasant or two. In Switzerland everyone on the Reserve is allowed, even in peacetime, to keep a rifle with 60 rounds of ammunition at home. It is sheer lunacy not to give our rifles in war time, to these very suitable people. After all, the Fifth Columnist does not operate in villages or amongst men doing odd jobs or working on farms.

It would be well if the Government could understand the amount of feeling there is in the country about the War Office delays and our failure to use willing volunteers. Nobody can understand why there should be any trouble about distributing rifles. There is no need for them to be up-to-date weapons, old Martinis would do admirably for the kind of work we are undertaking. At the end of the last war there must have been millions of rifles under the control of the Government and presumably we have been making a considerable number since. *Where* are those rifles now? It would have done some politicians good to have heard my companions' views on the subject as we wandered round a very wet aerodrome, armed with a couple of 12-bore guns.

Another important point is the question of administration. The volunteers are quite willing to follow anyone who has had military experience, but they are not in the least interested in their landowners or other local magnates. There is a very general feeling that the country has been let down by the comfortable classes, and it is most unfortunate that the Government seems to be picking out a number of elderly retired people, some of whom took no part in the last war, and placing them over the heads of men well known in the village who have perhaps earned a D.C.M. or M.M.

Finally, this new body of volunteers is far too valuable to be treated in this amateur way. Those who have put themselves down as willing to serve anywhere should be separated from those in reserved occupations—such as farming—who must be spare-time volunteers. The former should be mobilised at once and made part of the regular Home Defence system.

VOLUNTEER

A LONDON DIARY

I LEARNT a lot in a week-end in Dublin. Superficially it is just as it always was. Pleasant to be once again in streets that are lit up at nights. A black-out was ordered for a few days, but nobody took any notice and the comedy soon ended. Petrol is also supposed to be rationed, but I could not find that it made any difference. I came upon one household which provided against petrol rationing by laying in 100 gallons or so in a big tank, which was then covered over with hay for propriety's sake. But the scheme did not work well because a favourite duck made a nest on the top of the hay and they did not want to disturb her by drawing off the petrol. The same easy atmosphere, lavish hospitality, good whisky and endless talk—nothing changed here. But last week a parachutist was discovered. Technically Ireland has been invaded by Germany. The endless talk had a new and serious subject matter.

* * *

Where were the Free State's sympathies? I asked. Well, the question was complicated. Broadly, I decided, the characteristic attitude of the Irish was to enjoy seeing England discomfited but to feel dismayed at the idea of Germany winning. Like Stalin and the Communists and many Americans, the Irish have all liked peppering Britain secure in the assumption that John Bull would always pull through. But—disturbing thought!—if the Allies are beaten, what will happen to Ireland, America and Russia? The number of active German sympathisers is certainly small. Nobody can be sure just how large or how pro-German the I.R.A. is. There are certainly some hundreds or thousands of fanatics who might form a very dangerous Fifth Column; there are a few Germans about—there is a German Legation in Dublin, and there is a large number of people who are just too unused to facing any situation to be able to confront this new and utterly appalling one. But at last things have begun to happen. I think the Government is taking the most important steps—whether adequate or not I cannot judge. While I was there Mr. De Valera had a conference with the Opposition leaders—an extraordinary novelty—and since I came back it is announced that the three political parties have united for the purposes of defence.

* * *

To-day there are three possible policies for a small neutral country. First, there is the Danish policy of submission, which means absorption in the Reich without the destruction of cities and with no more than the shooting of a few brave people, the persecution of Jews, the surrender of refugees and the end of individual freedom. The country that so acts becomes in practice, however much it detests it, part of the German war machine and gives up, for the time at least, all that it has stood for in the world. This may be the most sensible policy for a country that has no means of defence. Certainly civilisation has a better chance of surviving than in a country which half fights and half submits. The second policy, which is the easiest for politicians, has been adopted by Norway and Holland and is really the silliest of all. A country that cannot maintain its independence and yet challenges the might of Germany is simply burned and bombed to bits and does not seriously help in checking the Nazi advance. The third policy would be to join up with the Allies and survive or perish with them. The situation is complicated in Ireland by the fact that Ulster is part of Britain and already at war with Germany.

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The discovery of a used parachute in a house of a man named Held suggests that the Free State intelligence service is still pretty good. The police searched Held's house and broke into a locked room. According to Held, who was arrested, the room was let to a German named Brandy about whose affairs he knew nothing. In the room was found a parachute, 20,000 U.S.A. dollars, some highly revealing documents and, oddly enough, a number of Austrian and German military medals. Brandy, supposed to be the parachutist, is still at large. It seems that he is the son of a German resident in Dublin, an old acquaintance of University dons and others whom I've met. Rumours rush round that there have really been a lot of parachutists, ten, some say, two hundred according to others. Actually, I have ascertained that this is the only parachutist known of—a point of great importance because one probably only means that an organiser and propagandist has been dropped from Germany, while ten or more would be the actual beginning of an invasion. People in Dublin are now waking up to the probability of an invasion by sea and air, perhaps to coincide with the invasion of Britain. Excitement was increased on Monday when it came out that a Mrs. Francis Stewart was arrested in connection with the Held affair. She and her husband are very well known in Dublin. He is a popular novelist who has actually written a book about parachute and aerial invasion. He gave a course of lectures in Germany not long ago and is said to have returned there just before the war.

* * *

Coming back to England I was astounded once again at the imperturbability of the British people. I no longer think that they are unmoved because they are unawakened: it is mainly that a sense of British invincibility has always been part of their make-up; and the man-in-the-street is determined to carry on with his allotment or his bicycling club or his Sunday walk as long as possible. It is his way of showing that Hitler can't get him down. Only in London and in a university city have I met that look of harassed anticipation of the worst which I first saw among German intellectuals in the winter of

1932. Imagination and education are the only things to save us in the long run, but in such a moment as this they make life more difficult. The uneducated man judges by experience and just suspends judgment when things fall outside that experience. The man of imagination and the intellectual with his trained mind and his contacts with other intellectuals and "people in the know" is too much accustomed to give judgments on everything and on all occasions. Less solidly based he often lives in a côterie of talk. Intellectuals are an essential class, but they may be a confounded nuisance if not given work to do. Many of us, whose hopes have been thwarted and whose fears have been fulfilled during the last ten years, are easily accused of "defeatism," because people do not understand that for our generation the war itself is defeat. Individualists who have pledged themselves, if they are any good, to following their own judgment, telling the truth as they see it and serving the causes they hold good, suddenly confront a situation in which they cannot be individualists any more. One well-known pacifist told me the other day that he was now supporting the war: "the herd instinct in time of danger," he explained. Similarly, when I am asked how the dickens it comes that I can so far forget my anti-imperialism and Socialism as to write an article strongly supporting Mr. Winston Churchill, I reply that I have not abandoned my faith and that I may in the future, if circumstances change, totally alter my view of the right kind of action, but that when I and my kith and kin are confronted with the immediate danger of extermination, I am not so decadent that I cannot welcome as my temporary leader a man who has courage and the qualities of leadership.

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Several correspondents pointed out a silly misprint in last week's Diary. It was, of course, in 1937 (not 1927) that the Germans held manoeuvres to impress the world with their new tank and aeroplane technique of attack.

* * *

If home propaganda includes maintaining a cheery spirit, I hand the palm to Fortnum and Mason for deftness of touch. A well-designed wrapping paper is over-printed with "overheard" remarks, such as :—"He's so exquisite, he's in a preserved occupation," "Don't look round, dear, but I think we're being bombed," "He's got a magnetic what ?" "Godfrey's bound to win," "Camels go seven days without water, but your Uncle Arthur went without it for seven years," "Even her hair is khaki now," "Nanny crocheted Baby into one of the sleeves," "They've gone to Scotland for the shooting."

I suggest a dash of Fortnum's in place of the bitters now used.

* * *

The taxi-driver: "Oh, the Belgians have given in, have they? That's what comes of a day of prayer!" CRITIC

THAT GERMANY

Will You Walk Into My Parlour . . . ?

The German press since the beginning of the war has always been careful to spare France and to describe her as being dragged along at England's chariot wheels. To-day there are many who say openly that the war of annihilation is only directed against England, and in political circles in Berlin on Saturday the view was often bruited: if Belgium and France now take the chance, if they still have a spark of political sense, and lay down their arms, they will have the possibility of obtaining quite favourable peace conditions. The German High Command directs its campaign still against England. German statesmanship is certainly ready to make considerable concessions to France.—*National Zeitung*, 20th May.

Social Life in Moscow

The Englishmen have decided to intensify their social activity. They think it a clever idea to give nice little parties which get talked about among the neutrals. They do not hesitate to take part in dances, whereas the French obviously have less taste for this type of entertainment. In the first months of the war the Englishmen certainly had the sympathy of the majority of the neutrals. Now in social life one observes more and more the after-effects of the German successes. An appreciable change of feeling has taken place and there are many anecdotes about the nervousness and irritability of old French acquaintances. As a German one feels a new wave of sympathy and understanding. Neutrals who previously did not go about much with Germans are now anxious to make new contacts. They do not want to be behindhand. It would be silly not to grasp the proffered hand. At the May Day parade one could see how the military attachés of the various lands here represented stood together with German officers, while a little group held itself at a distance—the English, the French and the military attaché of the U.S.A. In face of the realities of Denmark and Norway English insouciance in its tailcoat and at its nice little dances begins to fade.—*Frankfurter Zeitung*, 8th May.

Those British!

However much the British boast they have no more culture left to defend. Their culture is now part of fabulous antiquity. Their brutal methods of piracy, of which the world receives every day new proofs, have made them what they are—and that is something which cannot be too often called to mind. The British have as their sole and single war objective the maintenance of the Empire, the booty of years of plunder. Unlike us they have no national holiday on May 1st, which is a holiday of work. They have no respect for work such as we have, they do not know how to value work as an honour: they regard it only as a means to personal enrichment. That is why the worker in England is so little respected and why England possesses no social legislation like Germany. She does not even have the concept of the comradeship of work or of social service, though these concepts are now taken for granted by the German people.—*National Zeitung*, 1st May.

The Long Arm of German Law

The reformed criminal code now applies to foreigners whose behaviour in foreign countries can be punished by German courts whenever the protection of German interests demands it. Without regard for the code of the particular country, the German law is now valid in the case of certain offences by foreigners. These offences include everything which in German law can be described as offences against the authorities, e.g. treason, as the word is defined by German law, sabotage, etc. The *Frankfurter Zeitung* makes a significant comment, "only a powerful great power can enforce this principle in practice."—*National Zeitung*, Basel, 22nd May.

Nationalising the Derby

The Reichsminister for food and agriculture has ordered that the great race for 3-year-olds that hitherto has taken place yearly in Hamburg under the name of the German Derby shall in future be called the Greater Germany Prize for 3-year-olds.—*Frankfürter Zeitung*, May 1st, 1940.

THIS ENGLAND

Our prize of 5/- for the contribution at the head of the column goes this week to W. A. Payne.

All cuttings should be addressed to "This England," 10 Great Turnstile, High Holborn, W.C.1.

During three weeks in different parts of France I saw no British soldier under the influence of drink. The army keeps to itself and has little to do with the civilian population. It was very rarely indeed that I saw an officer or soldier with a lady, and when I did the circumstances would not have justified me in attributing evil to the association.—The Rev. Thomas Tiplady in the *Methodist Recorder*.

The gracious dignity of this famous old house has been enhanced with the passing of the years. Every modern comfort (including excellent A.R P. facilities) has been blended in.—Advertisement in the *Times*.

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS

Mrs. H. (Edgbaston).—"Horror" does not rhyme with "morrow," nor "joining" with "mourning."—*Birmingham Post*.

There is one trade which continues to flourish through bad times: that is, the corsetry trade. The greater the difficulties ahead, the more women feel that they should fortify themselves with the support not of the light elastic belts of peacetime, but with corsets which really control the figure. In Marshall and Snelgrove's department, for instance, the honest corset of former times has come back.—*Observer*.

CARELESS TALK

I HAVE read several censorious criticisms of a recent brewers' advertisement which, suggesting that beer is best, advised the manhood of the nation to drop into the local pub and get a brief respite from its worries by talking things over in an atmosphere of comradeship. The critics looked on this as the most appalling advice in wartime. Believing, not that beer is best, but that beer loosens the tongue, they conjured up pictures of soldiers, sailors and airmen under the influence of drink roaring out vital secrets in the hearing of the Fifth Column in all the public houses of England. They seemed to think that the invitation to drink a glass of beer was an invitation to drunkenness. Either that, or that a man who has drunk a glass of beer is more likely to give away vital secrets than a teetotaller.

It seems to me that, though the imparting of vital secrets may occasionally be due to an overflow of drink, it is far more often due to an overdose of vanity. The pleasure of letting other people know that one is in the know is much the most fertile origin of gossip. A perfectly sober officer's wife cannot resist the temptation to share a secret that should never be given away with her perfectly sober friends over the teacups, and her perfectly sober friends, ecstatic in the possession of news they should never have been told, become heroines among their equally sober friends for an hour as they spread the exciting story. I have been told many rumours that should never have been repeated both during the last war and during this, but never by a man under the influence of drink. I do not deny that public houses, like restaurants and all resorts in which one is surrounded by strangers, are places where it is of particular importance to keep a guard on the tongue. But I fancy that more vital secrets have been given away in recent years by talk at the dinner-table in the hearing of servants than in public houses.

Certainly, if I had been a member of the Fifth Column, all the time I have spent in public houses since the beginning of the war would have been wasted. Most of the talk has had as little to do with the war as a crossword puzzle. I went into a public house the other night just as a customer slightly "under the influence" was leaving, and, as the landlord looked after him, I could hear him saying appreciatively to another customer: "What I like about him is that, no matter how tight he gets, I have never heard him swear. Never heard him use a bad word" he added. "He's like old Smith the window-smasher. There was Smith, a powerful old chap more than seventy years old, and, when he had a few drinks in him, something funny happened to him and he had to smash a window. I have thrown him out of this place," he went on sympathetically, "but I never heard him use a bad word. Do you remember the window-smasher, Mr. Y.?" he asked me. Though an old customer, I had to confess that I could not place him. I had never, unfortunately, been present during one of his exploits.

"There was one window in Broad Street," continued the landlord dreamily, "that he used to be particularly fond of. Wouldn't make a big hole in it, you know. Just so big." And he closed his fist to show me. "In the end the magistrates got tired of having him before them, and sent him to be examined by the Lunacy Commissioners. The window-smasher warned them that it would be no use, and told them that he was as sane as they were. Anyhow, he went before the Lunacy Commissioners, and, after they had examined him, they said to him: 'Get out. You're as sane as we are.' And so he was—as sane as you or me, till he had a few drinks in him. Oh, he was a great chap, was the old window-smasher."

That, I think, is the normal kind of careless talk that you hear in the public houses. It is careless in the true meaning of the word which is now monopolised by that abominable modernism, "carefree." Even soldiers are glad to talk about something else besides the war in the uncomfortable comfort of a bar. The snatches of conversation you hear from them are seldom the sort of thing to make a spy prick up his ears. I overheard an officer in a saloon bar the other day saying to an elderly man as he held out his cigarette-case: "Have a cigarette." The elderly man shook his head in refusal. "Go on," said the officer. "Have one. It'll make you cough." "I don't want to cough," said the elderly man. For some reason or other, I thought that a delightful piece of dialogue. It is the sort of careless talk, at least, that brightens life for a moment in bars.

In the village inns beer does not seem to lead to the divulgence of vital secrets any more than it does in the urban public houses. I know one landlord of a Kentish inn, however, who, in order to guard against all risks, told a strange customer the other day not to come back again, suspecting that he was a too careful listener. But what could the strange customer have heard even if he had sat there during every hour that the place was allowed by law to be open? He might, it is true, have heard where the local headquarters of the parachute-watchers is, who the members are, and how many rifles they possess; but he could probably have learned that without going to the expense of buying a glass of beer. He might also have heard a good deal of talk about the war, but it would mostly have been talk about news that had appeared in the papers. Now and then, he might have heard on inside authority of the magnificence and confidence of the men in the Royal Air Force and of the miraculous excellence of their machines; but this, too, he could have gathered from the papers.

He would have learned nothing to write home about, indeed, except that the English countryman was indomitable in his belief in the ultimate defeat of Germany, and that dismay in the presence of bad news was an emotion of which he seemed to be incapable.

He might even, to his surprise, amid the occasional execrations of Hitler as a monster, have heard a tribute or two from old soldiers to individual examples of German courage in the last war. In the Kentish inn I listened last Sunday to an ex-soldier paying such a tribute. "I was in the Ypres salient one day," he said, "when a German airman suddenly appeared and did in six of our observation balloons, one after the other. And, when our men went up after him, the way he fought, looping the loop and trying every other trick to dodge them, was the most wonderful thing I ever saw in my life. I was standing beside an officer, and when the German was brought down, he turned round and said: 'If ever a man deserved the V.C., that was one.'" "I saw that," said another ex-soldier. "I was there that day." "He was a hero, that fellow," said the other. And I felt as they raised their glasses to their lips as though they were drinking a toast to a brave dead enemy.

Battles, however, are only a part of the matter of the conversation one hears in village inns. I met a little man, with a grey moustache and apple-red cheeks, on Sunday, who told me of the shortage of beer in the village towards the end of the last war. "Every day," he said, "as soon as the beer in the house was finished, the place used to close. There was a man who lived about a mile up the hill, and who was very fond of a pint of beer, but who didn't like walking a mile here and a mile back if there was no beer to be had. So, on an evening like this, if the beer ran done, we used to hang a white handkerchief on a pole to warn him that he might as well stay at home, for the place was closing! Oh," he added with a chuckle, "the minister at the chapel preached a sermon against it. He called it the white flag."

After that, we had a discussion about beans—about broad beans and how, if they are sown in winter, they are less susceptible to blight—about scarlet runners and how, when they have grown old and full of seeds, it is possible to make an excellent dish of these seeds or to pickle them. We talked about cuckoos and the great number of them that seem to be in England this year. (I see that Sir Willam Beach Thomas says that this year the migrant birds have invaded England in exceptional numbers). I fancy that, because of this, the cuckoos are having an exceptionally bad time of it, for the severe winter must have greatly reduced the number of resident birds in whose nests visiting marauders can deposit their eggs. I thought this when I saw two cuckoos flying into an oak in my garden on Sunday and flying off again to make wide circles again and again round a neighbouring field with cries that sounded like lamentations. It seemed to me that the female cuckoo must be in distress, not daring to lay an egg till her mate had discovered a spare hedge-sparrow's nest. All the hedge-sparrows' and meadow-pipits' nests in the country must have been commandeered a fortnight ago. There are occasions on which it is impossible not to sympathise even with an inveterate sinner.

This, then, is the kind of talk it has been my lot recently to listen to. My experience may not have been typical, for I have scarcely met one even of those "dismal Jimmies" of whom Mr. Harold Nicolson spoke the other evening on the wireless. Not, at least, in a public house. Perhaps they are commoner in clubs, where that often depressing and misleading thing, inside information, circulates more freely. The English worker, so far as I can judge by talking to him, refuses to be down-hearted. The railway-porter, an old soldier who gave me the first news of the capitulation of King Leopold on Tuesday, said to me: "Even so, we'll still beat them." And, as he spoke, he smiled like a happy sailor. An old gentleman in the train was in a less blissful mood. "A nice sort of fellow!" he exclaimed indignantly, slapping the paper that had just brought the news from London. I agreed with both of them.

This sums up most of the careless talk I have heard during the week, almost all of it uttered in the presence of beer-glasses. I have come—perhaps foolishly—to the conclusion that beer is not particularly conducive to the disclosure of vital secrets. Y. Y.

THE SHORTEST WAY OUT OF MANCHESTER

Mr. George B. Wilson, a well-known statistician, who for many years has devoted his attention to figures relating to the production and consumption of alcoholic liquors in the United Kingdom, has written a book called *Alcohol and the Nation.** It is an encyclopaedic work, in which the interested or curious reader will find pretty much all the facts concerning the liquor problem in the British Isles, so far as they can be expressed in figures, as well as a great many facts not so expressible. The changes in the drinking habits of the people, which have coincided with this and that change in social conditions, in education, in the prices of alcoholic beverages and in convention, are clearly shown both statistically and by relevant quotation from contemporary observers. We are shown how the Excise duty on Beer has risen from six and ninepence in 1900 to 134 shillings in 1931, and that on spirits from eleven shillings per proof gallon in 1900 to seventy-two and sixpence in 1931. We are told about the rises and falls in popularity of rum and brandy, and of Irish and Scotch whisky. There are interesting things about Pot Stills and Patent Stills and about the five distinct classes of Scotch whisky—Highland malts, Lowland malts, Cambeltowns, Islays and Grains. Very interesting, again, is Mr. Wilson's account of the development of the system of tied-houses and of the financial power of the " rationalised " breweries and distilleries. We learn that, whereas in 1760 Whitbreads brewed 60,508 barrels of beer, Trumans 60,140, and Thrale (afterwards Barclay, Perkins and Co.) 30,740, even by 1814 the numbers of barrels brewed by these firms were respectively 141,000, 165,000, and 260,000. By 1836, the twelve principal London brewers brewed over two million barrels between them.

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* *Alcohol and the Nation.* By George B. Wilson. Nicholson and Watson. 63s.

By 1890, 70 per cent. of the licensed houses were tied, and the brewing trade was " at the zenith of its history." The *Licensed Victuallers' Gazette* declared that:

> As the barons came out to defend the country against attack, so have the brewers come out in the defence of true liberty. If we were asked to point out a trade distinguished for honour and responsibility and the carrying on of which has developed and sustained the best interests of our English character, we should unhesitatingly point to that of the brewer.

Mr. Wilson obtained in 1927 particulars of three hundred and sixty-five breweries with a total capital of over £222 millions. He found that the net total of brewery shareholders in Great Britain did not exceed 150,000. He says that in that year, twelve London breweries with a total capital of £51 millions were controlled by 300 persons.

There is an aspect of " The Drink Question " to which Y. Y., in an amusing article, drew attention the other week. To Mr. Wilson's book, Lord Stamp contributes a eulogistic Foreword, in the course of which he disapprovingly says that " expenditure on alcohol absorbs some seven or eight per cent. of the national income." Is this true? It is a statement often made by reprovers of depravity. Even in the Report of the Royal Commission on Licensing, it is said without qualification that the total amount spent on liquor in Great Britain in 1929 was £288,800,000. But of that sum, over £130 millions was taken by the Government in the form of taxes on liquor and licences.

To quote Y. Y., " There are temperance advocates who deplore the amount of money that is spent on whisky, but the figures they quote—rather misleadingly—include the enormous taxation paid as well as the comparatively small amount of money the distillers would charge if whisky were duty free. Most of the money said to be spent on whisky is no more spent on whisky than the Income Tax is spent on whisky. It is spent on education and a vast number of national services."

Although the sum of money spent on alcoholic drinks in this country continues to be so high as to shock Lord Stamp and social welfare workers generally, the amount consumed has steadily decreased. This seeming anomaly is accounted for by the increasing contribution of the liquor trade—that is, actually, of those who drink beer, wine or spirits—to the National Exchequer. At the beginning of this century, that contribution was £41 millions. In 1936, it was £105 millions. Here are the figures showing the amounts actually consumed. In 1900, our people consumed nearly 46,000 proof gallons of spirits and about 1,300 million standard gallons of beer. In 1935, these figures had fallen to 9,000, and 600 millions respectively. Per head of the population, the consumption of spirits fell from 1.12 proof gallons to 0.19; and of beer, from 31 gallons to 13. Yet the retail cost to the consumer of beer and spirits drunk in 1900 was £185 millions and in 1935 £243 millions. So much for the finance. What about the drink itself?

There are few subjects on which ordinary people hold stronger and more divergent views than that of the rightness or wrongness of drinking alcohol. Everyone agrees—even the man who indulges in it—that the practice of drinking to excess is bad from the point of view of the individual's own health and happiness, and wicked from the point of view of his family and country. The story of the misery and crime, the heart-burnings and the heart-breakings, the ruined homes and neglected children, for which drink can be legitimately held responsible is a long one and a terrible one. No wonder people with a sense of social responsibility become obsessed with this dreadful tale, and feel impelled to strain every nerve and use every effort to exterminate a disorder provocative of so much human suffering.

That alcohol taken in excess—whether in amount or in frequency—is a poison, we shall all agree; but because a thing may be harmful in excess, do not let us draw the false conclusion that it is necessarily harmful in a lesser degree when taken in moderation. That overeating is an evil does not prove that eating in moderation is also an evil. Too much of a good thing makes it into a bad thing—whether it is work, or play, or conversation. Even over-consideration for others can make their life a burden nearly as much as selfish neglect can do. There is little evidence that beer or wine or diluted spirits taken in moderate quantities, at not too frequent intervals, causes physical harm to the human body. Nor is there any statistical evidence that it shortens life.

Some seventeen years ago a book was published, written by distinguished physiologists and physicians, on *The Action of Alcohol on Man*. One of the authors was Dr. Robert Hutchison, now President of the Royal College of Physicians. Professor Starling was another, and Professor Pearl, of the Johns Hopkins University, was a third. The last-named writer struck me, I remember, as having a slight bias; for he adduced for our enlightenment the fact that a number of guinea-pigs which he kept intoxicated six days a week for six years far outlived their untreated brothers and sisters. The passage of Dr. Hutchison's which has stuck in my memory was that in which he defined a tonic as " anything which makes a patient feel better." Professor Starling dealt with the physiology of the subject. Briefly his conclusions were these: Alcohol, taken habitually " in excess," acts as a poison, diminishing mental and physical powers and tending materially to shorten life. People with unstable minds, who have great difficulty in bringing their highest and least developed faculties into effective operation, as well as the young—in whom the higher powers of control are not yet fully developed—are liable to be rendered still more mentally unstable by even the moderate use of alcohol. Normal people, on the other hand, suffer no physical harm from the regular moderate consumption of alcohol, even if varied by occasional bouts of excess. Three half-pints of beer or three ounces of whisky are completely oxidised, leaving no trace in the body at the end of three and a half hours; and smaller quantities in a much shorter time. Moreover, seeing that alcohol has the effect of disconnecting the higher controlling elements of the mind, it is of great value as affording these faculties a rest, enabling them to start again later with renewed energy and freshness.

" Alcoholic drinks," he said, " supply the most widespread and easily obtainable means of increasing pleasure of life, and of diminishing the frets and worries of daily existence. When alcohol is taken in moderation, the money spent on it must be compared with that spent on cinemas, theatres, music-halls, novels, and concerts. All these are means which the individual employs to lessen mal-adaptations of existence, and to procure himself a respite from reality." And he quoted McCurdy: " Conviviality is more important for the maintenance of our mental stability and effectiveness than we realise. It is because alcohol contributes to sociability that it holds the strong position it does among so many people." He might have quoted from a much earlier philosopher. " It seems to me, friends, to be right to drink; for wine comforts the soul, soothes the sorrow of man like mandragora, and arouses joy as oil the flame."

The real " alcohol problem " would seem to be this: How best to remove from the mentally unstable and those of weak will the temptation, and even the possibility, of persistent self-poisoning, without unduly interfering with the liberty of the normal adult individual to make moderate use of a discovery which man has, from the earliest historic times, employed to add to his happiness and to assist him in his perpetual work of adaptation to a none too easily endurable environment.

HARRY ROBERTS

GOOD KNIGHTS

O, CRIPPS is gone eastward and Hoare is gone west,
Their powers as envoys to put to the test,
On business and ambassadorial trips
None smoother than Hoare and none dauntless as Cripps.

The matter Sir Stafford is sent to transact
Has nothing to do with the Soviet pact.
When Moscow agrees both to buy and to sell
He may bring up a few other topics as well.
Cripps won't be left standing outside in the hall
By Molotov, Dimitrov, Stalin and all.

Sir Samuel's high mission will doubtless forbid
Finance should be breathed in the ear of Madrid
But statesmen's discussions though formal in tone
Have sometimes been warmed by the fact of a loan,
And our British grandee we can further commend
Since to Franco he comes as the friend of a friend.

To neutralise neutrals who neutral remain
Is our diplomats' errand to Russia and Spain;
Confusion would be even further increased
Had Cripps been sent westward and Hoare been sent east
So Great Britain agrees it is much for the best
That Cripps is gone eastward and Hoare is gone west.

SAGITTARIUS

THOMAS HARDY

Thomas Hardy was born on June 2nd, 1840. His birthplace was a cottage hidden away among woodlands on the edge of "Egdon" Heath. It was a lonely spot then; it is out of the way still, at the far end of a lane of scattered cottages known as Higher Bockhampton in the parish of Stinsford near Dorchester. The cottage has housed three generations of Hardys; they were master masons and Henry Hardy, the writer's younger brother, who built Max Gate, was the last to carry on the business there. The first Thomas Hardy was famous locally as a church musician and for 35 years he, with his bass viol, was the shining light of Stinsford Church choir. His two sons were in the choir also; the second, Thomas, was the father of the writer and he too was a keen musician, skilled in old dance music as well as church services. The old man died in 1837 and the string choir was given up soon afterwards but its traditions lingered and the boy Thomas Hardy was nurtured in them. He was very sensitive to music and used to go with his father to play at local festivities.

Another tradition in the family was the part played by Grandfather Hardy as a volunteer in the days when a landing by "Boney" on the Dorset coast was daily expected. Grandfather, in his young days, had been a bit of a smuggler as well. Hardy's memory was stored with traditions and his notebooks show how throughout his life he garnered scraps of quaint local history, with a great eye for the gruesome as one would expect. He had the typical countryman's taste for spicy events.

His mother, who was a great reader, early removed him from the village school to a superior one in Dorchester, but the boy continued to play his fiddle at village weddings and other goings on whenever he had the chance. So he became exceptionally familiar with the social side of country life. He never knew any other world as well as he knew his "Wessex" and his claim to fame rests largely on the magnificent use he made of that knowledge.

To his close observation of nature and his delight in noting comic traits of character (perhaps learned from Dickens in whom his mother revelled), was added a vein of something which shall not be called pessimism, for he hated to be called a pessimist, but must be described as grievance against humanity's lot. He was brought up as a believer and though the ancient pieties meant much to him always, he soon lost all definite belief. His novels are interpenetrated with a sense of injustice against a Fate which takes no account of man's desires and deserts. Hardy was not a profound thinker but a sincere and powerful writer who took immense pains to embody dramatically in his novels a view of life essentially his own; this was a blend of primitive fatalism and semi-emancipated thought with a temperament cheerful on the surface but despondent and hypersensitive underneath. He wrote to Edmund Gosse in 1887: "As to despondency, I have known the very depths of it. You would be shocked if I were to tell you how many weeks and months in bygone years I have gone to bed wishing never to see daylight again."

Except that as a young man he was often in love and apparently, judging from early poems and his first unpublished novel, with young women beyond him socially, there was no reason why he should have been despondent. He was luckier than most aspiring young men in his circumstances, with a good home to fall back upon, a devoted family and evident abilities. At sixteen he was apprenticed to a Dorchester architect, and upon going to London in 1862 he immediately obtained employment in the office of a well-known church designer and restorer and remained there for five years. But poetry and literature, above all poetry, attracted him far more than architecture and only the necessity of earning a living caused him to hover between architects' offices and writing for so long. Disheartened at the rejection of his poems by magazines, he turned to novel writing, but it was not until after the publication of *Under the Greenwood Tree* and *A Pair of Blue Eyes* that he finally, in 1873, gave up architecture. In the meantime he had become engaged to Miss Emma Lavinia Gifford, who was more or less the original of Elfride in *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, in which novel the surroundings of St. Juliot's, Cornwall, where Emma Gifford lived with her sister and parson brother-in-law and the romantic circumstances in which Hardy first met her are depicted, though nothing else in the novel is biographical.

Hardy and Emma Gifford married in 1874, but the marriage was not a happy one. No doubt there were faults on both sides, but Emma's character was of a kind more fitted to encourage a diffident man at the outset of his career than to make her an understanding wife when he became famous. At first she was genuinely devoted to Hardy and his career. But when he became famous and was made much of in London society she grew jealous and self-important, over-proud of her own small talents (she sketched, sang and wrote a little), and of her social rank compared with Hardy's. She was the daughter of a Plymouth solicitor and she had an uncle who was an Archdeacon, a feather in her cap which she was too fond of parading. Those were snobbish days and even Hardy seems to have been a little dazzled, at first, by Emma's relations. But these things soon ceased to count as Emma expected. When *Far from the Madding Crowd* was published in 1874, Hardy was acclaimed and success, literary, social and financial, followed rapidly. A more uphill climb might have united them. They had no children. They lived for a time in London, but even after Max Gate was built (where they settled in 1885) they went every year for many years religiously to London for "the season," from worldly motives, one supposes, for Hardy could never depict society life. His upper class characters are sticks and his touches—"he saw the profile of a richly mantled bosom on which a camellia rose and fell"—remind one of Madame Tussaud's. He and his wife were to be seen at all the big "crushes" in the 'eighties and 'nineties, to use a period word which they used. Society women ran after him and his head may have been a little turned, but "good little Thomas Hardy," as Henry James called him, was never unfaithful to Emma in the Divorce Court sense of that word nor was she ever unfaithful to him. But the tension between them grew and Hardy made no attempt at reconciliation, though they went on living under the same roof. Emma died suddenly in 1912. The shock of her unexpected death was great, and though Hardy married again, happily, not long afterwards, he never completely recovered from it. Poem upon poem, recalling the days of their first love, issued from his contrition. The most poignant of these were published in 1914 in *Satires of Circumstance*, but scarcely a volume of Hardy's poetry published after Emma's death does not contain some haunting memory of her. He never failed in his walks to Stinsford churchyard where Emma was buried and his will directed that he should be laid in her grave.

Undoubtedly, it would seem, these long years of personal unhappiness intensified his mood of revolt against a Power indifferent to man's misfortunes. He had always been inclined to collect instances of futile tragedy but the disposition grew so that the situations which Hardy devised for his characters seem often deliberately cruel as in *Tess* and deliberately squalid as in *Jude the Obscure*. He became an ingenious inventor of Life's Little Ironies. It was justifiably said by a reviewer of one of his last published collections of stories: "He just decoys his characters one by one into a circumstantial *cul de sac* and steadily blocks the entry."

One may be conscious of the weakness of Hardy's work and at the same time feel its greatness profoundly. His anger with God for not being there, as someone once described Hardy's attitude, has the effect of making his greatest figures, Eustacia and Clym in *The Return of the Native*, Henchard in *The Mayor of Casterbridge* and Tess, extraordinarily impressive, while his descriptions of nature and of country life are Victor Hugoesque in quality. There is the same deep poetic feeling for Nature as a whole in Hardy as in Victor Hugo, the same fine observation of detail. The massive reality and Biblical beauty of Hardy's pictures of rural occupations have surely never been surpassed. The vigil of the shepherd in lambing time, the sheep fair, the thunderstorm breaking up the fine harvest weather, the inside of the malthouse and its gossip, are scenes which Shakespeare or even Chaucer might have watched and Shakespeare himself might have created their attendant rustics.

Hardy wrote only one novel which profoundly stirred his readers to sympathy, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. He did not reach their emotions in his other books, though from the publication of *The Return of the Native*, in 1878, he had been regarded as in the forefront of British novelists. His designation of Tess as "a pure woman" roused enormous criticism, but mainly from people such as the mistress who found her maid reading it open at the chapter headed "Maiden No More" and confiscated the book. *Jude* was said to have been burnt by a Bishop, which amused Hardy, though other sounder criticism touched him so on the raw that he wrote no more novels and turned again to poetry.

The Dynasts was published in three parts between 1903 and 1908. Eminent critics have pronounced it to be a masterpiece and it won for Hardy the Order of Merit. Yet unless one is mesmerised by his reputation, that pronouncement must be disputed. Superlative adjectives can be found for *The Dynasts*. It is huge, consisting of 19 Acts and 130 scenes, covering ten years of the Napoleonic Wars; impressive—a panorama of great scenes unfurls itself below a celestial audience of Phantom Intelligences, a retinue of the Immanent Will

(Hardy's substitute Divinity)—and nobly conceived, the conception being of a unified vision of earthly affairs. But the conception is dominated by an earthly perspective. Certainly it is not disfigured by the Immanent Will's partiality for either of the combatants—the Will doesn't care one way or the other, the Phantoms come forward from time to time to remind us of this and the Pities deplore it—but there is no sign of any impersonal vision among the Intelligences, who are not very intelligent, merely exceptionally well placed reporters. The Pities have no deep understanding. Even the Ironic Spirit, so dear to Hardy, wastes his irony on trivial contradictions. To them might have been given a profound insight into the spiritual abomination of war, its destruction of the affinities of common humanity, the blotting out of the light of judgment and of choice among the peoples. But it is not given nor is any hope for the future suggested except in an inconsequent anthem improvised at the last moment by the Chorus, a mere concession to the vague optimism of Tennyson's " Oh, yet we trust that somehow good shall be the final goal of ill ! " Oh, that sloppy somehow ! as Matthew Arnold remarked. *The Dynasts* does not help us to clarify that sloppiness.

IRENE COOPER WILLIS

COUNTRY NOTES

ALL writers on country matters have commented on the particular beauty of this spring, and doubtless many keepers of private diaries have made similar entries. Some of us have taken the view that Nature was mocking us ; others, that she was doing her best to console. One must make up one's mind which way to accept it. At moments the recurrent exaggerated beauty seemed unendurable, at other moments it came as a gift of permanence and reassurance. I suppose it all greatly depends on the moods which attack us at different hours of the day, moods beyond the control of reason, moods not based on " the news," but on some strange unanalysed psychological process taking place within ourselves. Between breakfast and mid-day one may sink to a failure of spirit ; during the afternoon rise to courage and confidence ; by the evening be almost able to persuade oneself that one really prefers to watch history in this smoky foundry of its making than to live in the Victorian security of the late nineteenth century. The difficulty is to establish any constant level of one's mettle.

People vary ; but probably for most of us the early hours are the worst. To wake at dawn when the physical strength is lowest ; when the mind between sleeping and waking is at its least manageable ; when the nightmare slowly turns out to be not a nightmare at all, but the far more terrible truth ; when the loneliness of soul overcomes us and the sorrow of the separate burden appears in its starkness as a thing never to be shared—then indeed is the moment when courage is needed to find consolation and not irony in the beauty of Nature. Yet consolation is to be had, and a strange exhilaration, even in that bleak, abandoned hour. Perhaps the loneliness in itself serves to enhance perception's poignancy. I know that the other morning when I awoke, aroused not only by the first square of dawn beyond my window but also by the purr of engines overhead, I looked out on a world so fair that the inexpressible grief attendant on that hour dissolved into what was almost a rejoicing in the union of tragedy and beauty. It suggested a mythological marriage between light and darkness : the pale nymph of the English dawn lying still virginal and unravished before the Wagnerian wooing of Wotan. A thin and milky mist drifted across the trees, a huge pale lemon moon still moved suspended in the morning sky. A few stars still showed, pale yellow in the pale blue, though the weaker ones had vanished with the night. Those few great stars which had travelled from darkness into daylight seemed to me symbols of the faint far hope persisting into dawn. The weak had been extinguished ; the strong remained. And in a few moments the sun would come up, flooding all.

At times like these, when symbolism comes to mean something beyond a mere intellectual expression, great phrases surge into the mind. In times of stress and anxiety, the great phrases of literature and thought reappear with a fresh meaning. Thus on that morning as I looked out of the window a phrase of Jeremy Taylor swelled like an organ : " If our death could be put off a little longer, what advantage can it be in the accounts of nature or felicity ? They that three thousand years agone died unwillingly, and stopped death two days or stayed it a week, what is their gain ? *Where is that week ?* " (His italics, not mine.)

And then again, still looking out of the window, I got an echo of a passage from Plato's *Crito*, which I verified after breakfast and found apposite with a few omissions : " Is your wisdom such that you do not see that your country is precious and to be revered and in high esteem, and that you ought to show her reverence and obedience and ought to do whatever she commands, and to suffer if she commands you to suffer, in silence, and if she orders you to be scourged or imprisoned or if she leads you to war to be wounded or slain, her will is to be done. You must not draw back or leave your post, but in war and everywhere you must do whatever the State, your country, commands."

V. SACKVILLE-WEST

WAR PICTURES

WHEN Michelangelo and Leonardo were commissioned to paint the battles of Cascina and Anghiari they at once began drawing engaging young men in elegant attitudes. No modern artist could conceivably think in such terms of Montmédy or Arras. And pleasant as it would be to write a polite essay on the painting of war, comparing Uccello's polychrome cavalry and Mantegna's marble ephebes with the no less picturesque realism of Callot and Goya, such a disquisition would, in fact, have nothing to do with " England in Wartime," as shown in the interesting exhibition at the Leicester Galleries. The patient endurance of boredom and fatigue has hitherto been the chief virtue evoked in this country, and this is the least paintable of virtues. Several of the artists at the Leicester Galleries have, however, made the attempt : Mr. Robert Medley gives us *Auxiliary Firemen at Tea*, Mr. Daintrey shows us the *Air Warden*, Mr. Rupert Shepherd *St. John Ambulance Men Standing By*. Their pictures show the facts but never rise to a memorable expressiveness. To realise the immense stoicism involved, we must depend upon our own imaginative powers, for the painters have been too easily content with presenting mere facts. In a second category are the pictures showing an emotional situation. Mr. Graham Bell gives us soldiers with their wives in an Underground-train on the way to the stations where they will part. This is a brave attempt to make attitudes at once realistic and emotional, but the execution is less admirable than the idea. Mr. Moynihan's *Soldier's Farewell* shows a man in khaki and a woman, against a red wall with an arch. The picture is beautiful in colour, and very well composed, but what distinguishes it particularly is a curious detail : the two figures are holding bicycles, which adds to the pathos in a way I find difficult to explain. The more touching works of imagination, whether in painting or in poetry, usually depend on some such unexpected and unaccountable stroke. The longer I looked at this picture the more deeply it impressed me, and I earnestly hope that it will obtain for Mr. Moynihan employment as an official war-artist. He obviously possesses so exactly the qualities required. Mr. Coldstream's *Soldier* is a Carrière in khaki. At first I thought it feeble as well as ugly, but gradually I came round to it, and seemed to find in the soldier's face something more than realism, an expression of inarticulate fortitude, symbolical—if one dares use the word—of the heroism available in the common run of men.

In a third category are the pictures that show the changed aspect of town and country. Mr. Rogers, for all his skill, has muffed the balloon barrage—the beauty of those daylight constellations is not here. Mr. Kenneth Rowntree has a quick eye for what is curious or incongruous. The printed notice in *Coastal Defence* makes only a melodramatic or surrealist effect—deliberately unrelated to the rest of the picture ; but the camouflage picture and the anti-aircraft battery are excellent reporting. Mr. Paul Nash provides wit as well as a good design in his drawing of the sandbagged top of the Marble Arch. Mr. John Piper bases a decoration on the crosses of brown paper pasted on the London Library windows. Miss Beryl Sinclair has a pair of pleasing pictures showing the deserted streets, Mr. William Townsend shows how the war has hit Canterbury. Mr. Vivian Pitchforth has a clever picture of *War Material on the Roads*. This is, one suspects, the sort of war picture that many people want, but it seems to me quite unworthy of the artist. Compare his unconvincing pale blues with the sulky yellows and pinks—equally unrealistic—of Mr. Graham Sutherland's picture, and you feel the difference between melodrama and tragedy. It will interest the connoisseur to notice how little difference a greatly increased realism makes to the general effect of a Sutherland. But the wider importance of the picture is that, while other works in the exhibition show the pathos, misery and courage produced by war, this alone conveys the tragic sense—the perception, to which in England it has so far been mercifully difficult to attain, of war as a visitation sinister and calamitous beyond human intention or control, a destined agony enveloping limb by limb the human race in a punishment grotesquely out of proportion to its poor blindnesses and silly greeds. And this is expressed not by mourning monumental women or lovely bodies scattered in death, but by two or three bombers, draped with nets, vast ochreous insects at rest in a febrile dawn.

RAYMOND MORTIMER

PLAYS AND PICTURES

The London Ballet, at the Arts Theatre Club

Audrée Howard's ballets have all been characterised by a remarkable fusion of dance and music, and her latest, and perhaps loveliest ballet, *La Fête Etrange*, is no exception. The dream-like drama of delight, desire and ultimate discomfiture, stirred in a seigniorial wedding feast by the intrusion of a country lad who has lost his way in the forest, moves like an eddy on the lovely surface of Fauré's music, sustained by its underlying stream of melody. Ronald Crichton must be congratulated on his choice of the music, and Gerald Gover on his exquisite playing. Two songs, appropriately introduced into the action, were well sung by Myra Verney. Frank Staff, the unwilling intruder, gives just the right dreamlike quality to his dance, and Maude Lloyd, whom in our last notice we inexcusably confounded with Diana Gould, is perfect as the romantic young châtelaine who falls a victim to his charm. It is a beautifully conceived ballet, and well danced by all the company. Sophie Fedorovitch's dresses are charming and so are certain elements of the decor.

"Portrait of Helen," at the Torch Theatre

The Torch has a predilection for plays about simple best-selling novelists who separate from their critical but understanding wives and live to regret it. In the present version the separation lasts for twenty years and is ended by the wife's return disguised as her ex-husband's companion-housekeeper, to win the hearts and straighten the lives of her two grown-up children. The result is a pleasant comedy of manners that is little the less amusing for developing along the expected lines. The flighty daughter (Miss Jenny Laird) is cured of drink and nocturnal necking, the backward son (Mr. John Witty) is suitably encouraged, the smugness of the novelist (Mr. Edmund Willard) is severely shaken, and the angel in the house (Miss Dorothy Green) scores a general success. The Helen of the title has died before the action commences, but the gradual revelation of her personality through the reminiscences of the others is cleverly and effectively contrived. Although *Portrait of Helen* is conventional and strikingly unconvincing, it is nicely written and adequately entertaining.

"Swinging the Gate," at the Ambassadors

Mr. Norman Marshall has liquidated most of the old Gate cast, but that has not meant any marked change of policy; his new revue is not unlike its predecessor. Somewhat straggly and amateurish, it contains, all the same, enough high spots and middle spots to carry through the evening. Miss Hermione Gingold survives the purge and is there to impose her suburban view of life, notably on a Queen of Song, a Bacchante (a very good turn), the headmistress of a School for Espionage and La Gioconda. Miss Madge Elliott has a most successful and varied evening; she is perfect—perfectly cruel—as a South Coast woman, and perfectly hilarious guying a sentimental song and dance. Mr. Hedley Briggs does almost everything, including the decor, which is managed with economy, charm and wit. Mr. Peter Ustinov is an original and talented burlesque artist; his lecture on the joy of living by an aged Russian is a delight. Finally, Mr. Robert Helpman surprises us with some brilliantly successful impersonations. An intimate revue, if it continues too long with new editions of itself, is in danger of repeating its own jokes, and *Swinging the Gate* has hardly avoided this fault; nor is it always the best jokes that it repeats. Perhaps it will be something of a disappointment except to extreme Gate enthusiasts; others might be advised to wait a week or two, for with some careful weeding, pruning and tending it will be much better entertainment.

"Macbeth," at Raynes Park County School

Raynes Park County School, under the headmastership of Mr. John Garrett, has a reputation for excellent performances of Shakespeare. This *Macbeth*, produced during the worst week (to date) of the war, must be well up to their standard. Lately, West End performances of Shakespeare—even at the Old Vic—have become more and more starry. There is a welcome anonymity about a schoolboy performance, after some of these. At a certain age in England, all but the most exceptional actors, seem to lose the gift of speaking blank verse—which children can do with a transparent and charming naivety. *Macbeth*, done by schoolboys, has, it must be admitted, a certain wooden immobility, which is impressive, producing an almost classical effect in some scenes, but less successful in others. But the important thing in Shakespeare is to hear the lines—and how well, at Raynes Park, one does hear them, and how apposite they are to the day. Certain features of this performance stood out. Lady Macbeth lost herself in the part more completely than the other actors, and if her voice was a little gruffer than her lord's, we can accept this as a startling piece of realism. Macbeth had a bold appearance and sustained the part well, improving as he went on. The three witches, as shrill as only small boys can be, acted with a quite terrifying conviction. The murderer of Fleance looked like a Spanish anarchist. The dresses and scenery were excellent.

New Paintings at Tooth's
Lord Methuen at the Leicester Galleries

A Still Life by Mr. Matthew Smith—one of four now showing at Messrs. Tooth's—has been bought by the Queen. Her Majesty deserves our respectful gratitude for encouraging the best of our living artists—her collection includes works by Wilson Steer, Augustus John and Duncan Grant—and for continuing in these bleak days to set an example of discriminating patronage. Her Majesty's latest purchase is a truly regal picture, representing splendidly Mr. Matthew Smith's mastery of colour and delight in pigment. He is an artist whose work continually improves, and these new paintings have an authoritative air. They would stand up well, one feels, by the side of Old Masters. Beside them, indeed, most of their stable-companions at Tooth's look trivial or affected. Mr. Stanley Spencer's peculiar exercises will, no doubt, appeal to amateurs of the German Primitives, and Mr. Tristram Hillier's attempts to create a romantic mood by a wonderful wealth of detail may please those with a taste for either Böcklin or Dali. Miss Nadia Benois's view of a square at St. Rémy is a sympathetic rendering of a beautifully French scene. But apart from the Matthew Smiths, the best picture in the show is Miss Mary Potter's *Leaves and Fruit*—a delicious arrangement of colour. A fine set of drawings, made apparently from a window in the Cumberland Hotel, represents Mr. Paul Nash's inventive vision.

Lord Methuen, who is showing at the Leicester Galleries, is a very uneven painter. He is at his best in small pictures of architectural subjects, like the House in Regent's Park and Lacock Abbey. He uses skilfully a technique derived largely from the later Sickert. Obviously a highly cultivated man, he conveys very infectiously his enthusiasm for architecture. The two Interiors of Lacock Abbey are delightful in colour.

"The Shop Around the Corner," at the Ritz
"Pastor Hall," at the Carlton

Lubitsch provides another delightful comedy and it comes pat to the moment when we badly need good thorough-going escapism for an hour or two. The neat, romantic story is woven round a small department store in Budapest, its paternal proprietor (Frank Morgan) and his "family" of six employees. Among them are James Stewart and Margaret Sullavan whom an agony column advertisement has brought into anonymous correspondence. This situation Lubitsch embellishes with all the charm and wit of which we know him capable and produces as engaging a film as we have seen for some time. The acting throughout is impeccable; James Stewart has never been so skilfully produced, so that his trick of shy diffidence seems quite fresh and original. Margaret Sullivan sketches in her character of the sentimental shop girl with great conviction of voice and feature (if not of dress); and Felix Bressant (one of the three comic Communists from *Ninotchka*) is excellently droll. Special commendation for William Tracey, as the messenger boy, who brings a new impertinent talent to the screen. It takes a good deal to distract one from the real world in these days; *The Shop Around the Corner* succeeds. It is almost impossible to resist its fairy-tale romance, so artfully simple and so blessedly unviolent.

Pastor Hall, on the other hand, brings one back with a bump. It ought to have been made and shown in the careless pre-war days—but it is a measure of their carelessness that, if it had been, the Censor would doubtless have banned it. This English version of Toller's play is the first really successful anti-Nazi film, at least since *Professor Mamlock*. It is successful because it is acted and directed with a quite remarkable restraint which is only broken in the most brutal of the concentration camp sequences. In other films of this kind, the stupid mistake has been made of trying to Germanise the actors. Here it is the peculiar Englishness of the treatment which makes it so effective. But the producers, Roy and John Boulting and the actors, Wilfrid Lawson, Marius Goring, Nova Pilbeam and Sir Seymour Hicks, are to be congratulated on a picture which has the courage of its convictions without exploiting them.

THE COMING WEEK

SUNDAY, June 2nd—
C. E. M. Joad: "Truth and Propaganda," Conway Hall, 11.
MONDAY, June 3rd—
Poetry Recital in aid of Red Cross Fund, Central Hall, 1.15.
St. Bruce Bruce-Porter: "The Importance of the Child," Eugenics Society meeting, Burlington House, 4.30.
Herbert Read: "Art To-day—Achievements and Tendencies," Morley College, 7.30.
John Parker: "The Turkish Revolution," 12 Gt. Newport Street, 7.45.
TUESDAY, June 4th—
Sir William Beveridge: "Federal Union as a Peace Aim," 101 Piccadilly, 8.45.
WEDNESDAY, June 5th—
Rebecca West: "An Ignoramus's View of French Culture," French Institute, 5.
Geoffrey Wilson: "World Affairs—The Far East To-day," Dick Sheppard Centre, 8.
THURSDAY, June 6th—
Emil Burns: "Paying for the War," 2 Keats Grove, 8.

Correspondence

EQUALITY OF SACRIFICE

SIR,—I was sitting in a City restaurant last week reading THE NEW STATESMAN AND NATION when two prosperous city gentlemen entered and sat opposite. It is a restaurant which maintains a tradition both for the quality of its food and the standing of its clientele and whose cuisine I am only able to enjoy through the generosity of my employers. Having ordered their lunch their conversation turned to the current topic—the arrest of a Member of Parliament and Sir Oswald Mosley. "Excellent" said one quite disregarding my literature "and if they would only carry on with arresting about half of the Socialists it would be better. We don't want them, we want people who are with us." Remembering the number of times in the early '30s when I had attended socialist meetings and the socialist books which I had read at and since that time trying to awaken the public to the dangers of Hitlerism I almost gasped—but this was not all. "Yes," he proceeded, "they will soon be clambouring for a rise in wages. Can't you just hear them saying that food prices are rising, that they must have more? Put them in prison I say, we don't want people who won't make sacrifices."

With that the waitress placed his plate before him—a large portion of beef, cut exactly as he had directed, with just the correct amount of fat and with a dish accompanying it containing two vegetables. I thought of the hundreds of workers who, under the term of office of a party of which these men were obvious supporters had had no chance of such a meal even once a week. It was these workers who were now being called upon to make a supreme effort and to whom, if men such as these had their way, not one iota would be granted with which to meet the increased cost of living—even though at pre-war cost they had had insufficient. Would these men be prepared to run their businesses at a reduced rate of profit for the national good? I think not.

66 Village Way, EVELYN N. COWLEY
Neasden, N.W.10.

A PRECEDENT?

SIR,—The *Times* of May 29th contains a letter from Sir Charles Petrie. "If a precedent be required," he writes, "for the appointment of Sir Samuel Hoare as Ambassador to Spain, it is to be found in that of George Canning as Ambassador to Portugal in 1814. . . . Canning remained in Lisbon from December, 1814, until April, 1816, and remained M.P. for Liverpool throughout that time." Sir Charles has his eminence as a historian of the Chamberlain dynasty but the precedent he quotes is hardly so flattering to Sir Samuel as he seems to suppose. Canning's appointment was a notorious job and at the time was severely criticised as such. He went to Lisbon because of its climate for the sake of his son's health; and he arranged for the existing Ambassador to be removed merely because he thought it would be more agreeable to have an official position than to live in Portugal as a private individual.

I am not, of course, suggesting that Sir Samuel's appointment was due to his longing for a sunny climate. It is well known that his recreation is skating. SAM SMILES

DAILY WORKER

SIR,—I quoted the first paragraphs from the *Daily Worker's* account of the situation on the day before the German invasion of the Low Countries, both because these paragraphs contained the worst distortions, and also because I could hardly ask you to reproduce the whole article. But I challenge anyone to look up that article to-day and not find in it an extreme example of the tendency against which I am protesting.

As to the quotation from *The Coming Struggle for Power* which Mr. Rust reproduces, I stand by every word of it. I am obliged to him for reminding your readers that I fought to prevent the new inter-Imperialist war in the only way it could be prevented. For of course the only way in which new wars could have been finally prevented would have been for the British and the other European workers to have taken power and overthrown the rule of the capitalist classes of their respective countries. Moreover, I would now add that the Imperialist governments which held power in this country since 1932 are as criminally responsible for this slaughter as were the ruling classes of twenty years ago for the slaughter of 1914–18. I would also repeat that now, as then, "there is only one thing that can possibly save us," namely "the organised force of the workers." But what has that to do with the question at issue, namely, whether the *Daily Worker* was reporting the world situation in so distorted a way as to amount to apologetics for German Imperialism? JOHN STRACHEY

EMERGENCY POWERS

SIR,—The new Emergency Powers Act establishes at one stroke the complete machinery of a socialist or a fascist State. It was passed in order to attain the maximum of efficiency at a moment of the greatest danger. At the end of the war, assuming an Allied victory, there will be in force a system which has swept aside or can sweep aside competitive capitalism and has defeated or can defeat the power of finance. It will not be possible to revert to the old forms of government or the old economic relationships. Precisely as the new system is developed, so shall we establish in this country the fascist or the socialist State. The policies of the last nine years, culminating in the exigencies of total war, have already taken us far along the road to fascism and are likely by then to have taken us further. Will the Labour Party then assume the lead in the other direction? If it does, I am convinced that it will have behind it the vast majority of the British people. But, unless its determination is strong and its plans are ready, it will be defeated, as it has been defeated for nine years. That determination must be forged and those plans formulated now. I know that it will be said that nothing must be permitted to interfere with the effort to win the war. But there are available some of the best brains in the country which for various reasons are not required for that purpose. Is there any possibility of the Labour Party summoning them to this task? It would be necessary to forget those internal dissensions which have been largely due to the genuine belief in the necessity of maintaining the strength of the party machine. But, if those dissensions are not forgotten, the machine will be of little value, since the party will have either to join the ranks of the fascists, as it has at present, or to perish. The lead will in that case pass into other and, possibly, less desirable and capable hands.

61 Valley Road, B. N. LANGDON-DAVIES
Welwyn Garden City.

SOLICITORS

SIR,—Most of us are glad to see that Mr. Marshall has been permitted, in a lay journal, to call attention to the growth of bureaucracy in the solicitors' profession. As solicitors are to establish an indemnity fund, out of which members of the public, who suffer losses through solicitors, are to be reimbursed, neither the Public, the Law Society, nor anybody else need concern themselves with special laws, rules, regulations, prohibitions, inhibitions, and penalties specially designed to molest and persecute solicitors. Cruelty and tyranny have never prevented a single crime from being committed and even if they did they could not be justified. The Law Society is not concerned with common crime—this is a matter for the police and the Public Prosecutor. All the "crimes" that the Law Society should concern themselves with are breaches of professional etiquette such as touting, advertising, pretending to be a solicitor and so on. Mr. Marshall wishes for more intervention by the Court, this would be useful if the law were sound but when the law is unsound it is quite useless. Judges of the High Court and magistrates are not so much concerned with upholding the principles of law (of which they know little) as with upholding the petty rules and regulations of petty officials.

13 King's Hall Road, G. W. R. THOMSON
Beckenham, Kent.

PARACHUTE

SIR,—Permit me to suggest a slight, though possibly helpful, variant on the classical line of Mr. Stanley Sharpless's witty verse in your issue of May 18th, on the recent developments of the parachute.

"Si vis pacem, para shoot 'em."

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Current Literature

BOOKS IN GENERAL

THE writers of the Twenties successfully challenged some of the sexual taboos imposed by the Victorian Age upon English literature. But they usually retained an inherited decorum which prevented them from making public their personal problems and their feelings about their friends. It has been a task of the next generation to abolish this inhibition, witness the writings of Mr. Stephen Spender, Mr. Connolly and Mr. Isherwood. Among Lytton Strachey's closest friends were several of the best writers of our time, but none of these —except Mr. Desmond MacCarthy in one or two short articles—has written any account of him. And it has been left to Dr. Srinivasa Iyengar, an Indian professor, to attempt the first full-length study of his work. (*Lytton Strachey.* By K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar. Chatto and Windus, 5s.). He is inspired by admiration, though he never sinks into hero-worship, and he writes with a modesty that commands immediate respect. His first chapter, on Lytton Strachey's life, would be better away, since he has not been in a position to collect the necessary information. Mr. James Strachey has contributed a few facts, but there are a number of inaccuracies, and the background is absent. Lytton Strachey was born in the intellectual purple. His parents, his brothers and sisters were conspicuous for strength of intelligence and of character. Even his cousins were brilliant. His Cambridge life was most important in forming his opinions, and mention should be made of such figures as Lowes Dickinson, and the philosopher, George Moore. Dr. Iyengar refers to the verses Strachey contributed to an undergraduate anthology, *Euphrosyne*, but does not quote from these, though they show a gift for verse similar to Rupert Brooke's. He presumes that Strachey must have visited France once before settling in Wiltshire: in fact, like most of his circle, he was hardly less at home in France than in England, and he also travelled widely in other European countries. Another serious misunderstanding is revealed by the statement that he had few intimate friends. On the contrary, he possessed an astonishing power of establishing intimacy. Of persons whom he took against (sometimes on very inadequate grounds) he could be intolerant to the point of rudeness, but he was one of the most warmly affectionate men I have known. It was a great delight to arrive at his Wiltshire home—not a cottage, as Dr. Iyengar suggests, but a rambling house of the Miss Austen period, with long verandahs looking south to the Downs, and a library upstairs, lined with French and English XVIIIth-century authors in their original editions. There were fine pictures too, modern pictures, for Strachey was very alert in his senses, responding to all the arts of life. He had a particular taste and gift for nonsense, and when playing some paper-game in the evening, would throw across to one an improvised quatrain about a friend or a pussy-cat. I think that the delight in extravagant behaviour that appears in many of his portraits was partly fellow-feeling, for he was deeply unconventional, and never had the "nonsense" knocked out of him at a Public School. But he not only *was* "a character"—he *had* character. The mention of some writer or politician would suddenly reveal, behind the wit and the warmth, an unpardoning sense of right and wrong. The brisk assurance of his indignation would have astonished those who thought to dismiss him as an elegant trifler.

Strachey had a particular gusto for the complication of human nature. Gordon? "There were intertwining contradictions—intricate recesses where egoism and renunciation melted into one another." Prince Albert? "There was contradiction in his nature, which to some of those who knew him had made him seem an inexplicable enigma: he was severe and gentle; he was modest and scornful; he longed for affection and was cold." Mr. Gladstone? "Did his very essence lie in the confusion of incompatibles?" Bacon? "It was not by the juxtaposition of a few opposites but by the infiltration of a multitude of highly varied elements, that his mental composition was made up. He was no striped frieze, he was shot silk." To a great portrait-painter such intricacies have evidently the fascination of a challenge—any practitioner can catch the simple features of a fully integrated man like Wellington or Gibbon. But for Strachey, I think, complicated characters had a further charm—they reflected a duality in his own nature. He was idolatrous in love alike of Shakespeare and Racine; he wrote with equal sympathy of Browne and of Pope; he managed to harmonise in himself the mind of Voltaire and the feelings of Gray. Dr. Iyengar justly calls him "a romantic by temperament, a classicist by training, and often, in his own literary practice, both." In a different context he quotes a passage from *Character and Circumstance* about Horace Walpole:

> Perhaps the really essential element in the letter-writer's make-up is a certain strain of femininity. The unmixed male—the great man of action, the solid statesman—does not express himself happily on these little bits of paper that go by post . . . In the curious composition of Gibbon . . . there was decidedly a touch of the she-cat, the naughty old maid. In Walpole himself it is easy to perceive at once the sinuosity and graces of a fine lady, the pettishness of a dowager, the love of trifles of a maiden aunt, and even, at moments, the sensitiveness of a girl.

A strain of femininity helped to make Strachey himself not only a good letter-writer but a great biographer. No "unmixed male" could have sympathised as he did with the feelings of Queen Victoria, or of Queen Elizabeth; and it is noticeable that in none of his writings was he harsh about a woman. To Victoria indeed he was too kind, painting her old age in unjustifiably gentle tones. (His book, it must be remembered, appeared before the final volume of the Correspondence, which altered his view of her later years.) Strachey was conspicuously a Man of Feeling, in the Eighteenth Century sense. Of Macaulay he writes: "His sentences have no warmth and no curves; the embracing fluidity of love is lacking." Strachey's style reflects very exactly his character, penetrating, pungent and mischievous, but suave, caressing and at instants suddenly emotional.

He was indefatigably surprised by the desipience of *homo sapiens*—his favourite epithets remained "unparalleled," "singular" and "preposterous," but as the years passed, he came to understand better the causes of absurd behaviour. In *Eminent Victorians*, his first book, he hardly notices one of the most extraordinary features of Miss Nightingale's life—the illness that confined her to purdah for the second half of her life, an illness that was self-inflicted and indeed imaginary. But in his study of Froude, written towards the end of his life, he ventured a diagnosis: "We have our modern psychology to give us confidence," and the trouble was "old Mr. Froude, who was a hunting parson of a severely conventional type, with a marked talent for water-colours." He could not, however, arrive at any understanding of one enigma, the most perplexing of all. How could an intelligent man believe in the doctrines of Christianity? There was Lord Acton, for instance, but he preferred to avert his eyes from Lord Acton, except when a letter from the great historian came in handy for putting Bishop Creighton in his place. Unlike the Encyclopaedists, Strachey had not been brought up in a nursery and a school that were even conventionally Christian, nor had he enjoyed, at a Public School, the privilege of listening to passages from the Authorised Version read aloud eight or fourteen times a week—a privilege which is often a Public School's chief contribution to the study of English literature. The lack of such experiences considerably invalidated his assaults upon the Church: never having lived inside the fortress, he was aware of only those weaknesses in her defensive system which she was least able to disguise. And of her strength he was not aware at all.

Dr. Iyengar complains of his "libidinous imagery" and declares that he at once detested and was allured by "the terrible phenomenon of sex." The allurement is as obvious in Strachey's writings as in Gibbon's or Voltaire's. But the detestation? I see no evidence for this. He was a most uncompromising man in a dozen ways, possessed of an Eighteenth-Century certainty about right and wrong; and nothing —except brutality and ignorance—shocked him more than puritanism. Puritanism indeed, to his eyes, revealed a brutal love of ignorance. In his accounts of the great Toynbee edition of Horace Walpole, he repeatedly complains of the bowdlerisation—"barbarous prudery." His plea for freedom—*Avons-Nous Changé Tout Cela?* first published in these pages—is eloquent, powerful and passionate.

To summarise Strachey as an Eighteenth Century man is too simple. He had no illusions about that period: it was infuriating in its self-sufficiency. "A world, for instance, in which Voltaire's criticism of Hamlet, or Walpole's of Dante—'a Methodist parson in Bedlam'—could be meant seriously and taken seriously, would certainly have been a most depressing world to live in." He knew too that it was not sceptical: "its beliefs were rigid, intense and unperturbable." In literature, as in every other department of life, an unquestioning orthodoxy reigned. But the cultivated society of the period "was perhaps the most civilised that our history has known. Never, at any rate, has literature been so respected in England." Strachey, as this remark shows, was quintessentially a Man of Letters. He was lazy, to this extent, that he preferred reading books to writing them. But he was tireless in lifting his writing to the highest point of which he was capable. Even short studies—like the *Six English Historians*, which I take to be among his most exquisite performances—entailed enormous labour. Objection can be taken to some of his mannerisms—he was fond of dots and dashes and underlinings; and he allowed himself a free use of *clichés*. But his aim was not to write purple passages, or to contribute to Anthologies of English Prose. His aim was narrative. Here is his judgment of Gibbon's critics:

> Obsessed by the colour and movement of romantic prose, they were blind to the subtlety, the clarity, the continuous strength of Gibbon's writing. Gibbon could turn a bold phrase with the best of them—"the fat slumber of the Church," for instance—if he wanted to; but he very rarely wanted to; such effect would have disturbed the easy, close-knit, homogeneous surface of his work.

This passage applies to Strachey. A phrase, however felicitous, that held up the current was very rarely permitted to remain. Each sentence is so contrived that one is obliged to read its successor.

Three qualities, he says, make a historian; "a capacity for absorbing facts, a capacity for stating them, and a point of view." In the preface to *Eminent Victorians*, he pretends, with transparent disingenuousness, to be impartial. In fact, he was little more dispassionate than the two greatest English historians, Gibbon and Macaulay. Occasionally he even cooked a fact; there is no evidence, I believe, that Dr. Arnold's legs were short. Newman,

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Yorkshire Post 10s. 6d. net

JOHNATHAN CAPE THIRTY BEDFORD SQUARE LONDON painted for the sake of contrast as a dove, was armed with talons and a beak far sharper than Manning's. It is true that Bacon, at the end of his life, was "an old man disgraced, shattered, alone, on Highgate Hill, stuffing a dead fowl with snow"; but the phrase is carefully misleading. This was no crazed King Lear, but a scientist making a brilliant experiment in the technique of refrigeration. In such instances the dramatist in Strachey ran away with the historian. *Elizabeth and Essex*, indeed, is a tissue of imaginative hypotheses. I remember describing it in a review as a picturesque tragedy in five acts, which revealed its author in his true colours as an incurable romantic. He owned that these Renaissance characters eluded him, so mingled in them were elegance and brutality. But in how many instances (as he pointed out) had great historians been at daggers drawn with their subject: Gibbon devoted the industry of a lifetime to the study of barbarism and superstition; Michelet, a romantic and a Republican, was at his best in delineating the classic and despotic centuries. Yet it remains impossible, I think, not to wish that Strachey had given to a more congenial theme the time he spent upon *Elizabeth and Essex*. If he had lived, he might have been inspired to his masterpiece by the life of his favourite Voltaire.

Dr. Iyengar ends his book with some just animadversions upon the imitators of Strachey. Their books indeed are like the modernistic carpets in the Tottenham Court Road, which parody with mean absurdity the old designs of Cubist painters. Strachey's irony is replaced by prep-school sarcasm, his marble phrases by flaking plaster. I can think of no good writer who has had a worse influence. Confronted with these unreadable smart Alecks one longs for the old-fashioned biography in which you can find at least facts and dates. Imitation proves the most murderous form of flattery. But re-read Strachey, as I have been doing through these ugly days, and I fancy that you will find your old admiration for him increased. Here are the values peculiar to Western civilisation, the inheritance that it is now our passion to defend. For Lytton Strachey celebrated and embodied the light of disinterested reason, the potency of art, the geniality of friendship.

RAYMOND MORTIMER

EDUCATION AND WEALTH

Education and the Birth-Rate. By GRACE LEYBOURNE and KENNETH WHITE. *Cape.* 10*s.* 6*d.*

Culture and Survival. By GUY CHAPMAN. *Cape.* 8*s.* 6*d.*

It will be a pity if its title prevents the general reader from studying *Education and the Birth-Rate.* For here is a book which gives us a cross-section of our educational system not from the point of view of the educationalist or administrator, but from that of the parents, who wish to do the best by their children in a democracy vitiated by gross inequalities of wealth. In the course of answering the question which they set themselves—how far do the costs of education encourage small families?—the authors have expounded the whole problem of English schooling.

In a brilliant first chapter they describe how both the public and private schools on the one side and the State schools on the other grew up in response to demands created by the Industrial Revolution. Industrialists, in competition with Germans and Americans, found in the middle of the last century that they needed educated men in command, and also workers who could read and write; equally important, their children, if they were to take their place in the ruling class, needed a social *cachet* which their pedigree could not provide. It was also discovered that an industrial State needed a highly trained personnel for its civil service at home and abroad; and so the Universities were recognised, the Civil Service Commission established. Thus by the end of the last century England had ceased to be ruled by an aristocratic oligarchy; and examinations took the place of nepotism as the principle of selection for responsible posts. To-day a child's life history is determined by its own ability to satisfy examiners and its parents' ability to pay the bill. The fate of the elementary school child is sealed at the age of eleven by examination; that of the preparatory school boy (who is is in need of a scholarship) at the age of twelve or thirteen, and if a child is lucky enough or wealthy enough to achieve a secondary education, whether private or public, it must ascend the examination *scala* of School Certificate, Higher Certificate and University Degree. Even then the climb is not finished, for in nearly all occupations professional qualifications can only be obtained after courses lasting for several years. Since there is only room on this ladder for a tiny minority of the country's children, the competition is terrific; and the parental sacrifice correspondingly large.

Such a system might possibly be defensible if the competition were on equal terms, but it is notorious that all places in the preparatory and public schools, and a large number of those in the secondary schools, are occupied by children of fee-paying parents. J. L. Gray's Statistical Survey proved, moreover, that 70 per cent. of pupils in the central schools, from which advancement is very unusual, possess an ability equal to that displayed by only half of the fee-payers in the secondary schools. Even worse, only one-quarter of our available ability is allowed to achieve the higher rungs of the educational ladder. Nor can we even pretend that we are making progress towards equality of opportunity when we remember that in 1932 free places in the secondary schools were abolished.

Education and the Birth-Rate records in precise detail the costs involved in training for the various professions, from the £1,650 for a solicitor (apart from his previous school education) to the £405 for the Mercantile Marine. £3,000, if I reckon correctly, seems to be roughly the amount necessary if a father in England wishes to give his son a really good chance of succeeding as a doctor.

Moreover, as Prof. Tawney points out in his introduction, the system is deeply vitiated by a class bias in favour of the humanities and black-coated professions. Though the Spens Report may recommend that the Junior Technical Schools should be rated on an equality with Secondary Schools, social prejudice in favour of snob occupations creates a fierce competition to escape from manual labour. And so our State secondary education, instead of producing social equality, has achieved a new class war between the salariat with its secondary education, and the working classes. True, roughly half of the entrants to our Universities started their education in elementary schools; but this only means that the cream of the working class has been skimmed off and for the most part become class-conscious members of the salariat. From an aristocracy based on land we have become a bureaucracy based on examinations and the ability to pay.

Miss Leybourne and Mr. White draw the conclusion that the cost of education has important effects on the birth-rate. They have not convinced me of this thesis and my doubt has been strengthened by reading *Culture and Survival.* Though Mr. Chapman's book does not contain an equal weight of facts, it is full of illuminating ideas. He traces the social development from the break-up of the family as an autonomous agricultural unit to our modern plutocracy. It was not, he argues, the Industrial Revolution which finally destroyed the family, but, ironically enough, the abolition of child labour, or rather its supersession by adult male and female labour. So long as large families were paying propositions they survived. Now we are faced by a new problem; that of a society which is not so much acquisitive as wealth-conscious. For the achievement of a modicum of leisure by the workers was immediately followed by the capitalist exploitation of that leisure: the achievement of tolerable wages by the development of mass-produced consumers' goods, whose sales are promoted by dazzling advertisement. I suspect that if the cost of education was substantially reduced and the commercial exploitation of leisure retained, the result would be that people would still limit their families and spend more on advertised goods and services, in order to live up to the standards of values which they are taught by the press and the cinema. The tiny minority in all classes who value education for its own sake will always make sacrifices for it; the rest will not return to large families so long as plutocracy lasts. This conclusion is confirmed by the Nazis' success in checking the fall of the birth-rate. This has been achieved largely by removing from the masses the possibility of buying luxury consumers' goods and services, and at the same time providing them with soulless but steady employment. If we are to achieve the same result and still retain our liberties it will only be by liquidating the social snobbery and careerism of a plutocratic society. For this a good deal more than a cheapening of educational costs or the fulfilment of Hadowism is necessary.

R. H. S. CROSSMAN

NEW NOVELS

Cécile Among the Pasquiers. By GEORGES DUHAMEL. *Dent.* 9*s.* 6*d.*

Europe to Let. By STORM JAMESON. *Macmillan.* 7*s.* 6*d.*

The Ministry of Wishful Thinking. By BECHHOFER ROBERTS. *Hale.* 7*s.* 6*d.*

Stationary Journey. By HAZEL PYNEGAR. *Peter Davies.* 7*s.* 6*d.*

Over-praise is sometimes the most effective form of disparagement; and should Dr. Goebbels persistently proclaim the idealism and sagacity of the British Government he might very soon turn against it a great many of the would-be open-minded. In literature, unfortunately, such psychological compensation seems inoperative, and adulation, like mud, tends to stick. It has long been fashionable to laud the *Pasquier Chronicles* as works of outstanding genius, and almost all our most popular critics have agreed that they are "a truly great book" and "a permanent work of literature" written in a style "like steel lace in its combination of strength and delicate detail," and that their appearance can only be described as "a major event in fiction." When the chronicles were translated, "genius" and "masterpiece" showered like confetti, and all voices combined to acclaim "a grand job": "one of the great pieces of fiction of our time."

Cécile (which comprises *Les Maitres*, *Cécile Parmi Nous* and *Le Combat contre les Ombres*) takes the Pasquiers to 1914 and enables us to view their laborious annals in rather better perspective. In spite of 250,000 words very little happens in the present instalment. Joseph increases his fortune, Senac kills himself, Cécile marries and subsequently leaves Fauvet, Papa has another escapade, and the spiritual tension between Laurent and Justin is successfully maintained. The characters remain serenely unaffected by external events, and even the outbreak of war is little more than a distant

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rumour from outside the glass coffin of minutely detailed emotional relationships. It is all very competently written and gives an excellent subjective picture of pre-war French bourgeoisie, but never is there the least flicker of intellectual excitement, and nowhere does any of the family fail to react precisely in the expected manner. Were the book about one's own relations it would doubtless be fascinating; were the Pasquiers historically important personages this record of their psychological minutiae would delight the cultural voyeur; since neither is the case, these six hundred pages of careful analysis are often as wearisome as the perusal of a stranger's correspondence. But the Family Saga is so prevalent a current form that its leading exponents seem to tower not only over their rivals but over all contemporary literature; and thus by achieving pre-eminence in his own métier, M. Duhamel has come to be regarded as pre-eminent absolutely. I suspect that he himself is aware of this, and uses his famous Pasquiers as a shield for other writings. Two of the novels included in *Cécile* (the story of a conflict between two professors, and a Kafkaesque account of an innocent man's persecution by the press) have no true connection with the saga other than their narration by a member of the family, and seem, like some of the Pickwick cycle, to have been inserted merely so as to be sponsored by an established success. It would be unjust to deny M. Duhamel a great many admirable qualities. He is talented, sincere, careful, a good stylist, a tasteful sentimentalist and an acute psychologist; but he is not a genius, and it would be unfair to judge him by the standards one applies to greatness. "A truly great book," "one of the great pieces of fiction of our time" should light a fire in the mind, or wake a tide in the blood, or play on at least one passion or sensibility. The Pasquiers, however, do none of these things, and I am sure that few even of their greatest admirers can claim that they brought them the mildest catharsis.

Europe To Let is an earnest if efflorescent endeavour to illustrate the gradually accelerating slide that began in 1918 and went over the edge last September. Miss Jameson, in the person of an anonymous and palely characterised journalist, moves round Central Europe through the last twenty years, and records the psychological decay that made the present war inevitable. We are shown neurotic and unpleasant Germans in the occupied Rhineland, hypocritical French politicians and irritatingly pathetic Hungarian Jews. All nationalities, especially the Germans, who are notably nasty, emerge discreditably, with the single exception of the Czechs, who are credited with such a lovable simplicity that their betrayal is as distressing as a murderous personal treachery. Although Miss Jameson slightly overdoes her Czechs, she succeeds in conveying some of the shock that Munich gave to the liberals of Europe. Despite its excellent material this is not a successful novel; for it sets out to show the psychological decline and fall of post-war Europe, but ends merely as a fictionalised Gunther. Miss Jameson's narrator never comes out from the wings, but taints every scene with the spirit of journalese; and whatever character we are asked to observe is invariably seen through the horn-rimmed clichés of the foreign correspondent. But this is hardly the fault of Miss Jameson. The day has not yet quite arrived when the agonies of Europe will seem other than a newspaper story.

The Ministry of Wishful Thinking is, so far as as I am aware, the first full-length satire on that beloved public butt, variously known as Minf, 999, the Bloomsbury Bedlam and the Mystery of Malformation. The purpose of Mr. Roberts's Ministry is the propagation of encouraging rumours, and its activities range from the spreading of reports that Japan has invaded Siberia, to the insertion of cheering prophecies in newspaper astrological columns. Not unnaturally such a theme gives extensive scope for a great many old jokes, and has served as a sort of magnetic refuse dump for the humorous flotsam from nine months of war. The Ministry is headed by a lecherous and illiterate Minister, staffed by Old Etonians, retired Admirals and rugger blues; employs Yogi and Gaelic seers; spends public money with the lavishness of a half-witted Rennaissance prince; and ends by bluffing its way out of a parliamentary inquiry. As a whole, the book is very good fun; and although Mr. Roberts has thought of nothing so good as Auden's wireless-controlled crows and card-packs that demoralised the enemy by predicting disaster, he has some amusing ideas and a pleasantly astringent style.

Stationary Journey is set in an unusual environment, and the impetus of its initial originality carries us over most of its structural weaknesses. A party of travellers are stranded for a few days in a deserted Chinese village, and before a train arrives to carry them back to rooms of their own and reasonable washing facilities they have time to begin and abandon undesired amours, make and lose eternal friendships, and get thoroughly on each others' nerves. It is difficult to praise Miss Pynegar without seeming to disparage her. She tellingly conveys the boredom and discomfort of her episode, and accurately reproduces the stilted conversation of her intentionally commonplace characters. Her heroine is a silly young-middle-aged woman whose principal ambitions are a return to Pinner and a kiss from a European; and her hero a nice nonentity whose actions she can describe, but whose emotions she seems unable to understand. Personally, I found *Stationary Journey* readable and amusing, but that, no doubt, was due partly to its extreme brevity (40,000 words or so) and partly to its fine large print. If Miss Pynegar is aware of her limitations she may become a highly efficient novelist.

JOHN MAIR

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★FOLIOS OF NEW WRITING (5s.), which H. E. Bates in *Books of the Month* declares to be "the only serious attempt to remedy the fact that the English literary periodical is dead." *The New Statesman*: "The present number makes an excellent counterblast to those who think that only trash should be written in war time . . . thank goodness *New Writing* is still alive to delight us."

★THE BACKWARD SON by Stephen Spender (7s. 6d.), described by Richard Church in *John o' London's* as "a distinguished poet's first novel . . . a book whose beauty of phrase, conception and insight arrest the reader;" *The Scotsman* calls it "an uncommonly impressive work." *The Listener*: "One of the most striking first novels which have appeared for a considerable time."

★THE AMBERLEY PAPERS, edited by Bertrand and Patricia Russell, 2 vols. (Illus. 7s. 6d. each), the first cheap edition of a notable book which had a striking success when originally published in 1937.

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ARITHMETIC

Odd Numbers. By HERBERT MCKAY. *Cambridge Press.* 7s. 6d.

Arithmetic in itself is doubtless a dull subject. But in his little book Mr. McKay contrives to make it interesting and even amusing by the wide variety of problems to which it is applied. The comparative sizes of the world and an electron; the masses of the moon and the planets; the weight of a ten-stone gentleman at the surface of the moon; the weight of a 20-inch snow-fall at Hull; the number of years that would elapse before we could hear an explosion in the sun if we *could* hear it; the comparative lights received by Neptune and the earth—such are the subjects examined, practically by arithmetical methods only.

The scope of the book, however, includes wider matter since there are informal explanations of sine, cosine and logarithms; the calculation of their values by means of series; and an excellent introduction to Proportion in Geometry and its application to the circle.

An excursus on fantastic novelists such as Swift, H. G. Wells and Lord Dunsany shows how very difficult it is for the creator to avoid error and how impossible the Brobdingnagians and other giants would be upon the earth.

The book is by no means a text-book, but it would be useful to any teacher of the subject for the simplicity of the methods employed and the variety of illustration. Naturally the simple method of dividing by 73 is explained, and those engaged on some particular type of work are advised to make tables such as the multiplication table up to 20 × 20; 5 per cent. tables; wages tables and such formulas as converting francs per metre into shillings per yard.

Mr. McKay espouses with great force the cause of British units of space and weight against the advocates of the Metric System, and he stigmatises the report presented to the French National Assembly in 1791 as "The most unscientific report ever published. . . . One might have thought that a scientific commission would begin, logically, by considering what a unit is. They would have seen that it is a convenient amount of the quantity to be measured." More important perhaps is the writer's stand against the unnatural sums to be found in text-books, such as "Multiply 3m. 5f. 19po. 1yd. 1ft. 7in. by 37"; and his warning that figures in a product which exceed the degree of accuracy warranted by the data must be rejected.

There is little room for adverse criticism. The short-sighted may grumble at the indices on pages 22 and 23; and the absence of an index to the subject matter may be a cause of wasted time.

H. M. SILVANUS

THE JEWS AND THEIR FUTURE

The Jewish Fate and Future. By ARTHUR RUPPIN. *Macmillan.* 21s.

The author of this book is the well-known Professor of Jewish Sociology at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Many people—too many—have written about his subject lately, but he has qualifications possessed by very few of them. He knows his subject inside out. A great merit in his book is that probably 80 per cent. of it is facts and only 20 per cent. argument or opinion. A high proportion of the facts is statistical. This does not make it easy or particularly entertaining reading, and any one who wants merely a discourse about the fate and possible future of the Jews should go elsewhere. But if you want to know the actual facts which will show you what has been happening to the Jews in the last few hundred years, then Professor Ruppin is your man.

In Part I he deals with the numbers and distribution of the Jews. According to his statistics the total number of Jews in the world in the eighteenth century was about 2½ million, in 1850 nearly 5 million, in 1900 10½ million, and in 1938 nearly 17 million. Absolutely the increase is of course large, but it has almost always been less than that of the communities among whom they lived. This is due to the fact that generally the birth-rate is lower, the number of marriages per 1,000 is lower, and the death rate is higher for Jews than non-Jews. Mixed marriages have also had a similar effect, but, though Professor Ruppin gives some interesting figures for some countries, it is difficult to estimate at all accurately what loss of numbers has resulted from this cause. As regards distribution the outstanding fact in recent Jewish history has been the migration from Europe, principally to America. In 1880 75½ per cent. of the Jews lived in Eastern Europe and only 3 per cent. in oversea countries; in 1938 the figures are 46 per cent. and 32 per cent. The flow from Europe to America was enormously decreased in recent years by the United States immigration laws, but the catastrophic decline of the numbers of Jews in Eastern Europe will almost certainly continue, and it is highly probable that the time will soon come when there will be more Jews in the new world than in the old. That may have a dominating effect upon their fate and future.

In the remainder of his book Professor Ruppin deals with the economic structure of the Jewish communities in the various countries and the changes which have affected it in recent years, with the effects of assimilation and anti-semitism, and finally with Zionism and the position in Palestine. Here again he gives a mass of extremely valuable facts. It is clear that up to 1914 the continued existence of the Jews as a separate community depended upon the mass of east European Jews. In the western countries of Europe the process of assimilation was proceeding rapidly. Professor Ruppin contends—and there is much to be said for his view—that the existence of the Jews has always depended upon two factors—not entirely unconnected—their living among peoples whose civilisation was on a lower level than their own and their refusal to intermarry with Christians. These two factors were always operative in eastern Europe. In western Europe they lived among people whose civilisation was on a level with or superior to their own. And there assimilation has threatened their separate existence. Mixed marriages have been both a contributory cause to and an effect of this process. In America the conditions and the results have been the same as in western Europe. The eastern Jew arriving in the United States was not assimilated; the second generation, too, was not assimilated; but with the third generation there is a strong tendency towards assimilation, loss of religious beliefs, habits, and traditions, and frequency of mixed marriages. Forces now operating in the opposite direction are, of course, anti-semitism and Zionism. Whether the Jews survive in any large numbers as a separate community depends very largely upon the development of anti-semitism during the next 20 or 30 years and upon events in Palestine. If the fanatical anti-semitism of the Nazi spreads, the Jew will survive; he will survive if Palestine really becomes a National Home or a Jewish state. But in the new world, if the flow of Jews from eastern Europe remains dammed, it is probable that the Jew will be assimilated. If the Nazi doctrine does not spread to the west European democracies, he will probably be assimilated there. And in Soviet Russia, as Professor Ruppin shows, the process of assimilation proceeds rapidly.

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UNDER OBSERVATION

Jail Journey. By JIM PHELAN. *Secker and Warburg.* 12s. 6d.

This is a remarkable book about English prisons written by a man who served in them thirteen years of a life sentence. He describes himself briefly as " an ordinary intelligent man, of peasant origins," a skilled workman, a writer, who found himself one day in a Manchester cell condemned to death for shooting a man. (No details : autobiography is restricted to the author's prison years.) The sentence was changed to penal servitude. After the first panic and the impulse to escape had spent themselves, he began to look round. He was under special observation ; already he knew the tension of watching and being watched which later was to determine his smallest actions. The sliding shutter of the spy-hole, he found, was itself provided with a nail-hole through which the warder could peep unseen : a device, however, that the prisoner also could use with advantage. Beside a scratch on the wall there would be an official pencil mark to show that the scratch had been noted. Every cranny in the prisoner's life, every minute of his day were similarly accounted for. And yet it was possible, as he gradually discovered from the men round him, under this searchlight of suspicion to snatch moments of escape and individual action, to contrive something more than blank existence. It could be done—laboriously, expertly—by acquiring what Mr. Phelan calls the " survival-technique."

Have you ever seen the stick-insect ? It is not easy to see, even in a zoo-window, for its survival depends on its ability to remain indistinguishable from the branch it clings to. You look among half a dozen sticks of the right length and colour, and if you look hard enough one of them turns out to be the insect. Read Mr. Phelan's account of prison life and you will come to the conclusion that the behaviour of the average convict is a piece of protective play-acting no less grim and extraordinary. There is only one way, he says, of being a " good prisoner," of avoiding reports and punishments, while retaining one's sanity and initiative, and that is to learn the tricks of the professional pickpocket.

> It is a fact [he writes], on which I do most sincerely desire to challenge every penologist in England, that in an English jail a convict avoids punishment, retains his reason, maintains his personality, exactly to the extent that he can learn furtiveness, deceit, suspicion, sleight-of-hand, predatory alertness and automatic lying. In other words, his survival depends on the speed with which he can learn to behave like a working thief. I am sorry to say it took me nearly a year to learn even the rudiments. It was a full twelve months before I could palm a note or a piece of tobacco with confidence, or point foolishly in one direction to distract a warder's attention while I slipped something in the opposite direction, or behave suspiciously to attract surveillance while a friend " worked " elsewhere, or lip-read one warder's instructions to another, or lie convincingly, or mutter. I can do all these things now, when I do not need them. That is to say, the jail-people have taught me a trade I cannot practise.

Other characteristics of the survival-technique were the ability to smell an unseen approacher at a distance or a cigarette in a man's pocket, to speak a ventriloquial jail language only 10 per cent. English, to devise means of combating the insomnia and depression, or " black thinking" as it was called, which at times attacked every prisoner. The man who could master all these became the perfect stick-insect. One old convict whom the author came across at Maidstone had trained a jackdaw to fly out into the streets and collect cigarette-ends. The only virtue with a survival value seems to have been patience; but even patience was useless without cunning.

More than once in his description of such underground vitality Mr. Phelan pauses to assure us that it is typical and not exceptional ; that if one could lift the lid off all the jails in England, this is how their inmates would be found to be acting. Even without the assurance we should accept the picture, for he is a writer who gives us the " feel " of the life he is describing by observation of others rather than by introspection. His detachment, indeed, is remarkable. He knew from the start that his own salvation would lie in writing, and he set out methodically to annotate the behaviour of those with whom he had contact—fellow prisoners, warders, chaplains and doctors, higher prison officials. Many of his notes had to be written in the dark on smuggled paper or in a jumble of languages in the officially provided notebook. His attitude (he is proud of this) is that of the anthropologist working under difficulties. He succeeded admirably in equipping himself for the task as he went along ; the scattered notes began to take shape, he was able to make comparisons and draw conclusions about the community of which he was one. The knowledge that his book would smash preconceived ideas drawn from orthodox criminal studies on the one hand and romantic confessions on the other gave him the resolution to continue. *Jail Journey*, though it will be read avidly by everyone, is written *at* the prison authorities, the reformers, the " scientific " investigators with their eye to the other end of the telescope.

Several facts stick out a yard. One is the determination of the jailed man, by hook or by crook, to survive intact ; another, hardly less conspicuous, is the importance of sex. Mr. Phelan tells us that nine-tenths of prisoners' talk revolves about sex, and he was able to catalogue sixty distinct variations in the substitute sex-life of his companions. The official attempt to deal with this problem, which of course is never mentioned in reports, may be judged from the fact that when a woman dancer was allowed to give a performance at one prison the stage was surrounded with a knee-high screen. Authority, then, is aware of the problem, but more frightened than aware—Mr. Phelan's conclusion seems inescapable.

Throughout his book, which is a record interspersed with comment, we meet with the fundamental contradiction of our prison system : is the criminal there to be punished or cured ? We don't know. We try to do both at once, with a strong leaning towards the first. Cases of actual brutality, according to Mr. Phelan, are now rare ; but this is discounted by a continuous and trivial persecution which seems to have no object except to maintain the status of warder and prisoner, criminal and society. Reforms filter down slowly or are lost in an impenetrable conservatism. One of the first shocks Mr. Phelan experienced when he went to prison was the ban on prisoners talking in the exercise ring. He was told to shut up. " No man," he writes, " was punished for talking in all my time in the English jails : it was illegal to punish people for such acts. What happened was that a man spoke, a warder told him to stop, he spoke again and was reported : not for talking, but for disobeying an order." *Jail Journey* is not an indictment—we can read it if we like as an extremely acute autobiography in an unusual field—but that is pretty damning.

G. W. STONIER

Francis Cardinal Bourne. Vol. I. By ERNEST OLDMEADOW. *Burns, Oates.* 16s.

It is doubtful whether any biographer could make a Life of Cardinal Bourne interesting—unless he employed the reckless candour of a Purcell. But Mr. Oldmeadow has managed to be dull in a particularly unamiable style. He devotes a whole chapter to a deluded layman, who wrote libellous letters to Rome. He expatiates at enormous length upon the details of Education Bills that never were passed. In connection with a request from the Government that the Eucharistic Congress should not make a procession through the London streets, he says that the Cardinal (who protested but sensibly gave way) displayed the bravery of St. Thomas Beckett. He rarely refers to non-Catholic religious bodies without a vindictive sneer. The book, in fine, is irremediably provincial, and consequently unworthy of a man who, if not distinguished by great learning or striking saintliness, was at least a Prince of the most unprovincial of Churches. On the other hand, Mr. Oldmeadow does not find place to justify the Cardinal's conduct in the matter of the Southwark diocese, which was probably the most disputable of the actions discussed in this volume. It is impossible not to wish that the biographer had decided either to be more frank or to confine to one volume the chronicle of a comparatively uneventful life.

Week-end Competitions

No. 538

Set by T. C. Worsley

Queen Victoria's first recorded words are said to have been " I will be good." Competitors are invited to invent the first recorded words of : Tennyson, Lytton Strachey, Caligula, Wagner, Horace Walpole, Socrates, Henry James, Mae West, Spooner, Samuel Butler, Voltaire, Oscar Wilde, Sir Galahad, Frederick the Great, Marie Corelli, William Blake, G. K. Chesterton, Colonel Blimp, Cassandra, Mrs. Roosevelt, Abraham Lincoln, The Marquis de Sade, Major Quisling, Jowett.

The usual prizes are offered for the best set of four.

RULES—

1. Envelopes should be marked with the number of the Problem, in the top left-hand corner, and should be addressed to COMPETITIONS, 10 Great Turnstile, High Holborn, W.C.1. Solutions must reach the Editor by first post on Friday, June 7th.

2. Competitors may use a pseudonym. Type-

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script is not insisted on, but writing must be on one side of the paper only.

3. The Editor's decision is final. He reserves the right to print in part or as a whole any matter sent in, whether it be awarded a prize or not. MSS. cannot be returned. When no entries reach the required standard no prize will be awarded.

4. No competitor is eligible for more than one prize in any one week.

The result of last week's competition will be announced in our next issue.

RESULT OF COMPETITION No. 536

Set by Roderick Random

"Believe me . . . my dear Sir . . . if I remember rightly . . ."

The usual prizes are offered for a pen-portrait in not more than 250 words of a person whose conversation is punctuated by these phrases.

Report by Roderick Random

The virtues one looked for were originality and restraint, a combination of the two. For the danger should have been obvious, namely, of flogging dead horses, a pastime which the wording of the competition rather invited. Originality without restraint ran to seed in exotic subjects, like the Public Hangman, the Author of a Pamphlet on "The Co-education of Silkworms," the Curator of a Moscow Museum, of the Portrait of My Great Great Grandfather. None of the entries in this vein was sufficiently plausible. Pompous clubmen and retired Civil Servants were the easiest and most frequent choices and they needed great tact of handling, original writing or acute observation, to avoid the banal. Gordon Simpson came close with the beginning:

> "Never was Knighthood more fittingly bestowed" was the verdict when we saw in the Birthday honours "Knight Bachelor—Richard Fotheringay Pott." He looked the part, tall, portly, dignified; a born churchwarden; an inevitable chairman. . .

Richard Pomfret had some neat commonplaces neatly expressed in verse:

> Eavesdrop at his weekly Lunch
> Gaining some Rotarian hunch;
> Gatecrash at his monthly Lodge,
> Tip-and-vermouth, gin-and dodge . .

Geo. T. Lewis tempted me by showing enough originality to be sympathetic to his subject. E. Moynahan wrote far the best straight portrait, but I didn't care for the end. I recommend that the first prize go to Towanbucket for his verses and the second to C. F. Rathbone for a piece of, so to speak, self-portraiture.

FIRST PRIZE

I see the gentleman you have in mind
As robin-eyed, brisk, tedious, but kind.
He wears white waistcoats with a gentle bulge
That speaks a thwarted passion to indulge.
I'd place him as a First Division clerk,
Retired, who may be met with in the park
On summer mornings, taking exercise
(Less with his feet, perhaps, than with his eyes)
And pausing on the slightest provocation
To treat acquaintance to his conversation.
Disarming pompousness is in his voice
And well-worn phrases are his favourite choice.
He's argumentative: if you demur,
His eyes protest: he murmurs: "My dear Sir!"
He's in the know: you only have to hear
"Believe me" whispered gravely in your ear,
And some odd fact, which he has just revealed,
Might just as well be written, signed and sealed.
Better be warned, though: when he uses lightly
The pregnant phrase: "If I remember rightly . . ."
And makes a bid to seize your coat lapel,
You ought to say at once you feel unwell,
Because before that hand lets go your coat
You will have suffered from an anecdote,
A detailed, documented reminiscence,
Which blights with boredom everyone who listens.
But if you are his victim, take the rap,
For after all, he *is* a decent chap.

TOWANBUCKET

SECOND PRIZE

I am not, I think, a vain man. Certainly I lay no claim to good looks, and as to my attire, I am, I trust, careful without being foppish. But when I overheard Blenkinsop (by the purest accident, I may say) refer to me as "that pompous ass, Musso," I admit to a certain feeling of resentment. Political views have but little relation to physical characteristics, and I consider it no insult to be likened to one whose politics we may deprecate but whose energy we cannot but admire. But pomposity, believe me, is a trait which I deplore as much as the next man. If I have been forceful in the expression of my views (views, which I may add, are frequently substantiated by the *Times*), I trust I can appreciate forcefulness in my foes equally with that displayed by myself. At the same time, it was, if I remember rightly, no less a man than Neville Chamberlain who recently declared that there is a right and a wrong way of thinking, and if I humbly follow in his footsteps by thinking clearly myself and doing what little I can to induce others to do the same, I can only regret that Blenkinsop, who can see no deeper than to recognise a certain superficial resemblance in my make-up to that of Il Duce, prefers to believe that my small efforts in this direction are the result of something which he chooses to refer to as my pomposity.

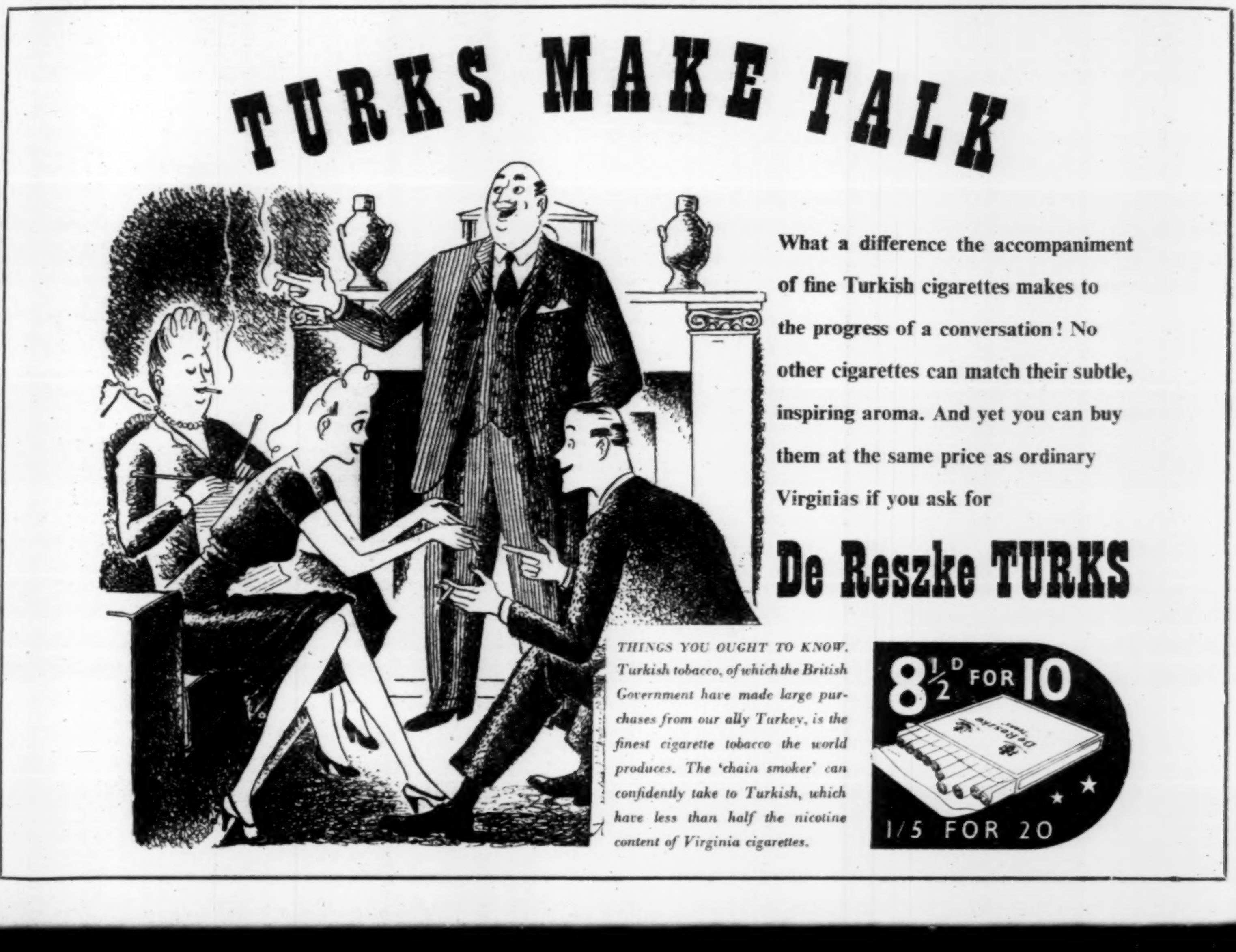
C. F. RATHBONE

LAST WEEK'S CROSSWORD

E	I	D	E	R	D	O	W	N	Q	U	I	L	T	S
M	■	O	■	O	■	B	■	O	■	P	■	A	■	A
M	I	S	S	A	L	S	■	R	O	A	D	M	A	N
A	■	S	■	S	■	E	■	M	■	N	■	E	■	D
■	W	I	N	T	E	R	G	A	R	D	E	N	S	■
A	■	E	■	■	■	V	■	N	■	D	■	T	■	C
G	I	R	A	F	F	E	■	S	P	O	N	S	O	R
I	■	■	■	I	■	■	■	■	■	W	■	■	■	O
S	Y	C	O	R	A	X	■	C	A	N	O	P	U	S
T	■	O	■	E	■	E	■	A	■	■	■	A	■	S
■	E	L	E	C	T	R	I	C	T	O	R	C	H	■
A	■	O	■	R	■	A	■	K	■	L	■	H	■	B
C	O	M	B	E	R	S	■	L	E	O	N	I	N	E
E	■	B	■	S	■	I	■	E	■	G	■	S	■	N
S	H	O	R	T	H	A	N	D	T	Y	P	I	S	T

Last week's winner:
D. Hawson, The Mount, Rillington, Malton, Yorks.

[In view of the paper shortage and the necessity of economising our space, we regretfully announce the termination of the long series of crosswords by L.-S.—ED., *N. S. & N.*]



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